LECTURES

ON

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

AND

PULPIT ELOQUENCE.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE favourable reception of the Lectures on Ecclesiastical History, and the desire of many to have an opportunity of perusing Dr. Campbell's prelections on the other branches of his theological course, have prompted the editor to offer to the public the following work. The Lectures on Ecclesiastical History the author had prepared for the press, having carefully transcribed and corrected them. The prelections now published were composed for the benefit of the students of divinity in Marischal College, without any view to publication. They were first delivered in the years 1772 and 1773, and the author continued, during his professorship, to read them to the students, as they had been at first composed. Indeed, they were written so closely, as to admit very little addition or alteration.

But though they want the benefit of the author's corrections, the language, it is presumed, will not be found very deficient in that perspicuity, precision and accuracy, which distinguished Dr. Campbell as a writer. His other acknowledged qualities as an author, the judicious and attentive reader will not be at a loss to discern. He will discover in this volume, great ingenuity with no affectation of singularity, freedom and impartiality of spirit without any propensity to fabricate new theories, acuteness of understanding without percipitancy or impatience in judging; endowments perhaps rare, but of the first importance in theological discussions.

To students of theology these discourses will be highly useful. They are more of a practical nature, than his lectures formerly published, and they abound in valuable counsels and remarks. From this volume and from the author's work on the Gospels, the student will learn, both by precept and example, how his industry and ingenuity may be most profitably employed.

The greater part of the abstract theological questions, which have afforded matter of inexhaustible contention, and the precarious speculations of some of our late intrepid theorists in religion, Dr. Campbell regarded as worse than unprofitable. In these theorists, he observed a fundamental mistake, in regard to the proper province of the reasoning faculty. Impatience in judging, he thought, was another great source of the evil alluded to. "Some people," he remarks in his last preliminary dissertation to his work on the Gospels, "have so strong a propensity to form fixed opinions on every subject to which they turn their thoughts, that their mind will brook no delay. They cannot bear to doubt or hesitate. Suspense in judging is to them more insufferable, than the manifest hazard of judging wrong." He adds a little after, "In questions, which have appeared to me, either unimportant, or of very dubious solution, I have thought it better to be silent, than to amuse the reader, with those remarks in which I have myself found no satisfaction." Never could teacher, with a better grace, recommend a patient cautiousness in judging. His premises, which are often of greater importance than a superficial reader is aware of, are commonly sure; the proper and obvious inferences he often leaves to the reader to deduce. The conclusions, which the author draws, are so well limited, and expressed in terms so precise, and so remote from the ostentatious and dogmatical manner, that the attentive reader is inclined to think, that he sometimes achieves more than he had led us to expect.

On questions that have been rendered intricate by using scriptural terms in a sense merely modern, and of such questions the number is not small, Dr. Campbell's clearness of apprehension, critical acuteness and patience of research have enabled him to throw a good deal of light. The Lectures on Ecclesiastical History afford some striking examples of his success in this way. And his work on the Gospels abounds in illustrations of scripture that may be of great utility in reforming our style in sacred matters, and in shortening, if not deciding, many theological questions. Some good judges have no hesitation in saying, that they never saw the scripture terms, *heresy* and *schism*, well explained, till they read Dr. Campbell's Preliminary Dissertations. Former writers had been so far misled by the common and modern acceptation of the terms, as to include error in doctrine as essential

to the notion of heresy, and to make a separation from communion in religious offices the distinguishing badge of schism. The primitive and genuine import of the words is so clearly ascertained by the author, that if a person unacquainted with the ecclesiastical and comparatively modern language were to read the dissertation, he would wonder, that there should ever have been any difficulty or difference of opinion on the question. This is only one instance out of many that might be produced from the same work, in which the reader will find the obscurity, wherein a subject was formerly involved, vanish entirely, and the genuine conceptions of the most venerable antiquity unfolded to his view. When that great work is understood and studied with the attention it merits, may it not be expected to have considerable influence, in leading men to look for the good old paths, that may have been long untrodden, and known but to few?

In the preface to the work above quoted, speaking of expositors of scripture the author has the following remark. "If I can safely reason from experience, I do not hesitate to say, that the least dogmatical, the most diffident of their own judgment, and moderate in their opinion of others, will be ever found the most judicious." To judge by this criterion, few authors have a better claim to our confidence than Dr. Campbell. Few have seen the right track so clearly, and few have advanced in it with a firmer step.

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LECTURES, &c.

INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSES.

LECTURE I.

Of the Science of Theology, and its several Branches.

THAT we may discover what is necessary for the acquisition of any science, we ought to consider attentively the end for which it is made the object of our pursuit. If the ultimate end be knowledge, or that entertainment which the mind derives from the perception of truth, the properest plan of teaching must be very different from that which ought to be adopted, when the end is practice. And as this last admits a subdivision (for there may be practical ends of very different sorts) the method best adapted to one sort may not be the best adapted to another.

I explain myself by an example, which comes directly to the point in hand. The christian theology may be studied, first, like any other branch of liberal education, in order to gratify a laudable curiosity; or secondly, to qualify us for acting the part of christians by practising the duties of the christian life; or lastly, to qualify us for discharging the office of christian pastors. It is manifest, that if, for answering properly the first of these purposes, a good deal more is requisite, than

would suffice for attaining the second, yet much less is necessary for the accomplishment of both these ends, than for answering the third. With regard to the first, which terminates in the acquisition of knowledge; theology is now very rarely, if ever, in this country, studied, like other sciences, purely for its own sake, as a part of genteel education, which (abstracting from its utility) is both ornamental and entertaining. Why it is not, though we may trace the causes, no good reason that I know of can be assigned. And with regard to the second view of teaching, namely to promote the practice of the duties of christian life, every minister of a parish is thus far a professor of divinity, and every parishioner is, or ought to be, thus far a student.

It is, I may say, solely for the third purpose, the most comprehensive of all, to fit us for the discharge of the duties of the pastoral office, that theological schools with us have been erected. I say this end is the most comprehensive of all. The least of what is required in the christian pastor, is that he may be qualified for discharging the several duties of the christian life; for in these he ought to be an ensample to the flock. Further, whatever, in respect of knowledge, supplies the materials necessary for edifying, comforting, and protecting from all spiritual danger the people that may be committed to his charge, or is of use for defending the cause of his master, must evidently be a proper study for the man who intends to enter into the holy ministry. Again, whatever may enable him to make a proper application of those acquisitions in knowledge, so as to turn them to the best account for the benefit of his people, is not less requisite. To little purpose will it be for him to be possessed of the best

materials, if he have not acquired the skill to use them. The former we may call the theory of the profession; the latter the practice. That both are necessary is manifest. The first without the second, however considerable, may be compared to wealth without economy. It will not be found near so beneficial to the owner, and those who depend on him for their support, as a more scanty store would be, where this virtue is understood and practised in perfection. Nor will the second do entirely without the first; for the best economy in the world can be of no value, where there is no subject to be exercised upon. Hence arises a twofold division of what is proper to be taught to all who have made choice of this profession, a division which merits your particular attention. The first regards purely the science of theology, the second the application of that science to the purposes of the christian pastor.

Under what concerns the science, I would comprehend all that knowledge in relation to our holy religion, which serves immediately to illustrate, to confirm or to recommend it. I say, *immediately*, because there are several acquisitions in literature which the christian divine ought previously to have made, and which are not only important, but even necessary in the way of preparation, though the connection of some of them with the christian theology may, upon a superficial view, appear remote. Such are the Latin tongue, moral philosophy, pneumatology, natural theology, and even history both ancient and modern, but especially the former. But though several branches of knowledge may contribute less or more to all the different purposes of illustrating, confirming and recommending

religion, it is evident that some studies are more directly adapted to one of these purposes, and others to another.

Let us begin with the illustration of our religion. It is proper to acquire a right apprehension of the subject, before we consider either its evidence, or what may serve to recommend it. The knowledge of the christian theology, in the strictest sense of the word, is no doubt principally to be sought for in the books of the New Testament. It was for the publication of this religion throughout the world, that these books were originally written. They contain the doctrine which first our Lord Jesus Christ himself, afterwards his apostles in his name, by their preaching, promulgated to mankind. As those great events, which make the subject, and serve as a foundation to the whole, were not accomplished till the ascension of our Lord, Christianity as a religious institution, authoritatively given by the Almighty to the human race, may be considered as commencing from the descent of the Holy Ghost on the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, as recorded in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

I said, that the knowledge of our religion was principally to be learnt from the books of the New Testament, but neither entirely nor solely from these books. In these, there are frequent references to the doctrines contained, the precepts given, and the facts recorded in other books of an older date, as comprising also a divine revelation supposed to be already known, and therefore not always quoted, when referred to, so as to be engrossed in the writings of the disciples of our Lord. These are the books of the Old Testament. Though both are of divine authority, and though each

is eminently useful to the right understanding of the other, there is this difference in the reception due to them from christians. The import of the declarations and the obligation of the precepts in the scriptures of the Old Testament are more properly to be interpreted and limited by those of the New, than the declarations and precepts of the scriptures of the New Testament can be by those of the Old. The reason is obvious. The Mosaic dispensation was introductory and subordinate to the Christian, to which it pointed, and in which it had its consummation. It was no other, than the dawn of that light, which by the coming of Jesus Christ has arisen on the nations in all its glory. Things necessarily obscure in the former are cleared up by the latter. From this also we learn to distinguish things of temporary, from things of perpetual obligation. It happens in several instances, that what was incumbent under the weakness of the first economy is superseded by the perfection of the last.

Now for attaining a more perfect knowledge of the scriptures, none will question the utility of studying carefully those languages in which they were originally composed. These are especially the Hebrew and the Greek. I say *especially*, because a small part of the Old Testament is written in the Chaldee, which ought rather perhaps to be considered as a sister-dialect of the Hebrew, than as a different tongue. But as there are other schools in which these languages are taught, they have never with us been considered, as constituting any part of the courses of divinity. They are more properly preliminary studies than branches of the theological science. Permit me only to observe, in passing, that they are nevertheless studies of the

greatest consequence to every one, who would arrive at a thorough acquaintance with the Bible.

But though the elements of these tongues are to be learnt in the schools appropriated to the purpose of teaching them, we are not therefore to affirm, that a divinity school has nothing to do with them. The books of the Old Testament are the only books extant, which are written in the genuine ancient Hebrew. And though the writings of the New Testament make, in respect of size, but an inconsiderable part of what is written in Greek, their style, or rather idiom, has something in it so peculiar, that neither the knowledge of the elements of the language, nor an acquaintance with the Greek classics, will always be sufficient to remove the difficulties, that may occur, and to lead us to the right understanding of the sacred text. To this the knowledge of the Hebrew will be found greatly subservient: for as the penmen of the New Testament were of the Jewish nation, and had early been accustomed to the manner and phraseology of the Septuagint, a literal version of the Old Testament into Greek; there is a peculiarity in their idiom, to be master of which requires an intimate acquaintance with that people's manner of thinking (and in this every people has something peculiar) as well as a critical attention to their turn of expression, both in their native tongue, and in that most ancient translation. Leaving therefore the rudiments of those tongues, as what ought to be studied under their several professors, or privately with the help of books, I shall consider what may be necessary, for begetting and improving in us a critical discernment in both, as far as holy writ is concerned. What is necessary for the attainment of this end I shall

comprehend under the name of *biblical criticism*. This I consider as the first branch of the theoretical part of the study of theology, and as particularly calculated for the elucidation of our religion, by leading us to the true meaning of the sacred volume, its acknowledged source.

Again, the christian revelation comprising a most important narrative of a series of events, relating to the creation, the fall, the recovery, and the eternal state of man; and the three first of these including a period of some thousands of years now elapsed, and being intimately connected with the history of a particular nation, during a great part of that time; the knowledge of the polity, laws, customs, and memorable transactions of that nation, must be of considerable consequence to the theological student, both for the illustration and for the confirmation of the sacred books. On the other hand, it will not be of less consequence for the confirmation of our religion, and the recommendation of this study, by rendering our knowledge in divinity more extensively useful, that we be acquainted also with those events, which the propagation and establishment of christianity have given rise to, from its first publication by the apostles, to the present time. The whole of this branch we may denominate *sacred history*, which naturally divides itself into two parts, the Jewish and the ecclesiastical, or that which preceded, and that which has followed, the commencement of the gospel dispensation.

Further, as the great truths and precepts of our religion are not arranged methodically in sacred writ, in the form of an art or science, but are disclosed gradually, as it suited the ends of Providence, and pleased

the divine wisdom to reveal them, and as some of the truths are explained and the duties recommended in some respect incidentally, as time and circumstances have given the occasion, it is of consequence that the theological student should have it in his power to contemplate them in their natural connexion, and thus be enabled to perceive both the mutual dependence of the parts and the symmetry of the whole. Arrangement, every one acknowledges, is a very considerable help both to the understanding and to the memory; and the more simple and natural the arrangement is, the greater is the assistance which we derive from it. There are indeed few arts or sciences which may not be digested into different methods; and each method may have advantages peculiar to itself; yet in general it may be affirmed, that that arrangement will answer best upon the whole, wherein the order of nature is most strictly adhered to, and wherein nothing is taught previously, which presupposes the knowledge of what is to be explained afterwards. This branch of study I call the *christian system;* and it is commonly considered as the science of theology strictly so called; the other branches, however indispensable, being more properly subservient to the attainment of this, than this can, with any propriety, be said to be to them.

Nor is it any objection either against holy writ on the one hand, or against this study on the other, that there is no such digest of the doctrines and precepts of our religion exhibited in the Bible. It is no objection against holy writ, because to one who considers attentively the whole plan of Providence regarding the redemption and final restoration of man, it will be evident, that in order to the perfecting of the whole, the

parts must have been unveiled successively and by degrees, as the scheme advanced towards its completion. And if the doctrines to be believed and the duties to be practised, are delivered there with sufficient clearness, we have no reason to complain; nor is it for us to prescribe rules to infinite wisdom. On the other hand, it is no objection against this study, or the attempt to reduce the articles of our religion into a systematic form, that they are not thus methodically digested in the Bible. Holy writ is given us, that it may be used by us for our spiritual instruction and improvement; reason is given us to enable us to make the proper use of both the temporal and the spiritual benefits which God hath seen meet to bestow. The conduct of the beneficent Father of the universe is entirely analogous in both. He confers liberally the materials or means of enjoyment, he gives the capacity of using them; at the same time he requires the exertion of that capacity, that so the advantages he has bestowed, may be turned by us to the best account. We are then at liberty, nay it is our duty, to arrange the doctrine of holy writ in such a way, as may prove most useful in assisting us, both to understand and to retain it.

It has been objected more plausibly against every attempt of reducing the principles and precepts of religion to an order, which may be called merely human and artificial, that it has but too plain a tendency to stint the powers of the mind, biassing it in favour of a particular set of opinions, infusing prejudices against what does not perfectly tally with a system perhaps too hastily adopted, and fomenting a spirit of dogmatism whereby we are led to pronounce

positively on points which scripture has left undecided, or to which perhaps our faculties are not adapted. That this has often been the consequence on the mind of the systematic student, is a lamentable truth, which experience but too clearly evinces. On inquiry, however, it will generally be found to have arisen not so much from the study itself, of which it is by no means a necessary consequence, as from something wrong in the manner of conducting it. Let us then, like wise men, guard against the abuse without renouncing the use, that is, without relinquishing the advantage which may result from this study properly pursued.

And the more effectually to guard us against this abuse, let us habitually attend to the three following important considerations. First, that every truth contained in divine revelation, or deducible from it, is not conveyed with equal perspicuity, nor is in itself of equal importance. There are some things so often, and so clearly laid down in scripture, that hardly any, who profess the belief of revealed religion, pretend to question them. About these, there is no controversy in the church. Such are the doctrines of the unity, the spirituality, the natural and moral attributes of God, the creation, preservation and government of the world by him; the principal events in the life of Jesus Christ, as well as his crucifixion, resurrection and ascension, the doctrine of a future judgment, heaven and hell, together with all those moral truths which exhibit the great outlines of our duty to God, our neighbour and ourselves. In general it will be found, that what is of most importance to us to be acquainted with and believed, is oftenest and most clearly inculcated; and that, as we find, there are degrees in be-

lief as well as in evidence, it is a very natural and just conclusion, that our belief in those points is most rigorously required, which are notified to us in scripture, with the clearest evidence. The more is exacted where much is given, the less, where little is given. The dogmatist knows nothing of degrees, either in evidence or in faith. He has properly no opinions or doubts. Every thing with him is either certainly true, or certainly false. Of this turn of mind I shall only say, that far from being an indication of vigour, it is a sure indication of debility in the intellectual powers.

A second consideration is, that many questions will be found to have been agitated among theologians, as to which the scriptures, when examined with impartiality, cannot be said to have given a decision on either side, though were we to judge from the misrepresentations of the controvertists themselves, we should be led to conclude, that contradictory decisions had been given, which equally favoured both sides. It has not been duly attended to by any party, that a revelation from God was not given us, to make us subtle metaphysicians, dextrous at solving abstruse and knotty questions, but to make us good men, to inform us of our duty, and to supply us with the most plain and most cogent motives to a due observance of it. From both the above observations, we should learn, at least, to be modest in our conclusions, and not over dogmatical or decisive, in regard to matters which may be justly styled of doubtful disputation or of deep research.

The third consideration is, never to think ourselves entitled, even in cases which we may imagine very clear, to form uncharitable judgments of those who

think differently. I am satisfied that such judgments on our part are unwarrantable in every case. Of the truth of any tenet said to be revealed, we must judge according to our abilities, before we can believe; but as to the motives by which the opinions of others are influenced, or of their state in God's account, that is no concern of ours. Our Lord Jesus alone is appointed of God the judge of all men, and are we presumptuous enough to think ourselves equal to the office and to anticipate his sentence? "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth." When Peter obtruded upon his master a question of mere curiosity, and said concerning his fellow disciple; "What shall become of this man?" he was aptly checked by his Lord, and made to attend to what nearly concerned himself, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me."

Once more. It has been the fate of religion, from the beginning, to meet with contradiction. Not only have the divinity (and consequently the truth) of the whole been controverted, but several important articles thereof have been made the subject of disputation, and explained by different persons and parties in ways contradictory to one another; therefore that the student may be enabled, on this momentous subject, to distinguish truth from error, and to defend the former against the most subtle attacks of its adversaries, the patrons of the latter; it is necessary for him, to be acquainted with *theological controversy*, which is the fourth and last branch of the theory of theology.

I would not be understood to mean by this, a thorough knowledge of all the disputes that have ever arisen in the church. Such a task would be both

endless and unprofitable. Of many of these, it is sufficient to learn from church history, that such questions have been agitated, and what have been the consequences. To enter further into the affair will be found a great waste of time to little purpose. But it is a matter of considerable consequence to us, to be able to defend both natural and revealed religion against the attacks of infidels, and to defend its fundamental principles against those, who, though in general they agree with us as to the truth of christianity, are disposed to controvert some of its doctrines. A more particular acquaintance therefore with the disputes and questions in theology of the age and country wherein we live, and with the distinguishing tenets of the different sects, with which we are surrounded, is necessary to the divine, not only in point of decency, but even for self defence.

It must be owned at the same time, that this thorny path of controversy is the most unpleasant in all the walks of theology. It is not unpleasant only, but unless trodden with great circumspection, it is also dangerous. Passion, it has been justly said, begets passion, words beget words. It is extremely difficult to preserve moderation, when one is opposed with bigotry; or evenness of temper, when one is encountered with fury. The love of victory is but too apt to supplant in our breasts the love of knowledge, and in the confusion, dust and smoke, raised by the combatants, both sides often lose sight of truth. These considerations are not mentioned to deter any of you from this part of the study, but to excite all of you to come to it properly prepared, candid, circumspect, modest, attentive, and cool. It has been truly and in-

geniously observed, that the ministers of religion are much in the same situation with those builders, who in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, whilst they worked with one hand, were, on account of their enemies from whom they were continually in danger, obliged to hold a weapon with the other.

Let it here be remarked, that these two last branches, the christian system and polemic divinity, though perfectly distinct in their nature, are almost universally and very commodiously joined together in the course of study. The consideration of every separate article of religion is aptly accompanied with the consideration of its evidence; and the consideration of its evidence necessarily requires the consideration of those objections, which arise from a different representation of the doctrine. Thus the great branches of the theoretic part of this profession, though properly four in their nature, are in regard to the manner in which they may be most conveniently learnt, justly reducible to three, namely *Scripture Criticism*, *Sacred History*, and *Theological Controversy*. These are sufficient to complete the character of the theologian, as the word is commonly understood; who is precisely what our Lord has denominated "a scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, who can, like a provident householder, bring out of his treasure, new things and old."

But even what is sufficient to constitute an able divine, is, though a most essential part, yet not all that is necessary to make a useful pastor. The furniture has been pointed out, but not the application. In the former, we may say, lies the knowledge of the profession, but in the latter, the skill. This second part I intend to make the subject of another discourse.

But before I conclude the present, I shall beg leave briefly to observe to you, that when first I set about composing these lectures, I was in some doubt, whether I should use the Latin language or the English. I weighed impartially the arguments on both sides, and did at last, I think with reason, determine in favour of the latter. On the one side some appearance of dignity pleaded; on the other, real utility. It may be said to draw more respect to the profession as a literary study, that the tongue employed be unknown to the vulgar. On the other hand it is no reflection on the proficiency in learning which you my hearers may have heretofore made, to suppose, that not being so much accustomed to the use of Latin as of your mother-tongue, ye should not with the same quickness and facility, apprehend what is conveyed in the one, as what is delivered in the other. It is not barely knowing the words and the construction of a language, that will make us apprehend it with perfect readiness, when spoken. For this purpose long practice is necessary even to the best proficient. For so powerful is the influence of habit on association, that even when a person has made so great progress in the language, as that he can hardly ever be at a loss, when sufficiently attentive, for explaining a term or analysing a sentence, yet if his opportunities of hearing it read or spoken have not been frequent, it will be difficult to him, for any continuance, to give the necessary attention. A man is said to understand a tongue, when there is an association or mutual attraction established in his mind between the words both single and combined, and the ideas they are intended to signify. But though this connection may be soon established, it is practice only

that can quicken the attraction, and as it were smooth the passage from the one to the other. Wherever this is not done, attention requires too much effort to be long supported. Public speakers, even when their language and style are perfectly familiar and perspicuous to their hearers, find considerable difficulty to command an attentive hearing for half an hour, especially to matters of speculation; they have little need then, if I may be allowed the metaphor, to lay an additional tax on attention, a commodity of so great consequence to them, and at the same time so scarce. Were it indeed the custom, that in all the previous parts of education which our students pass through before they enter this hall, the lessons were given in Latin, it would be reasonable that the practice should be continued here. As the hearers would by habit be perfectly prepared, it would be even laudable to contribute, by continuing this usage, to familiarize them to a language, with which every man of science ought to be thoroughly acquainted. But as the case is different, I should think it unpardonable to sacrifice the profit of the students to the parade of learning; or to waste more time in composing, to no other end, I may say, but to render the composition less useful. The words of Doctor Burton, both in relation to the manner of conducting the theological study, and to the language proper to be employed, are so much to my purpose, that I shall conclude this lecture with them. The passage is in Latin, but there is a great difference between attending for three minutes and attending for thirty.

Desideratur specialis aliqua institutio, quæ prophetarum filios ad officium pastorale obeundum aliquanto instructiores faciat. Disciplina scilicet primitus in-

stituta, pro temporum superiorum ratione, figuræ et coloris ut plurimum scholastici, ad subtilis cujusdam artificii ostentationem potiu squam ad usus communes comparata, exolevit. Hinc fit ut discipuli nostri ad operosa systematum disciplina usque adeo abhorreant, ut extra ordinem sine duce vagari et errare malint, quam ex præscripto sapere, et theologiæ synopsin aliquam prælibare; adeoque sine institutione debita, sine disciplina, sine exercitatione prævia, uno quasi impetu facto, ad officia momenti longe gravissimi administranda accinguntur. Præceptorem idoneum quærimus, catecheticum et popularem, qui quicquid est præceptionum, de historia universa biblica, evangelicis dogmatibus fidei, proceptis mæralibus, sive ethica christiana, et de iis quæcunque demum in genere homini theologo sunt scitu maxime necessaria, sermone non Latino, sed vernaculo proferat, plenius atque distinctius a catechumeno percipiendum.

LECTURE II.

Of the Practical part of the Theological Profession, or the Duties of the Pastoral Office.

In the former lecture, on the nature and extent of the theological profession, I observed, that when considered in respect of the end it was intended to answer, it might properly be divided into two parts, the theoretic and the practical. The one supplies us with what is called the science of theology, the other instructs us how, by a proper discharge of the duties of the holy ministry, to employ the acquisitions we have made in that science, for the benefit of the christian people. The first part I have already briefly considered, subdividing it into three branches, biblical criticism, sacred history, and systematic or polemic divinity. I should now proceed to the consideration of the second part, *the practical*, which regards the pastoral office in particular.

But before I enter on this, permit me only further to observe, in relation to what was the subject of the preceding discourse, that though the different branches of the province of theology have not perhaps been formally distinguished and enumerated as above, yet a sense of the necessity of all of them seems to have influenced our church-rulers in this northern part of

the island in the excellent regulations they have established for the trial of candidates for the office of preacher, as well as for that of the ministry. That presbyteries (to whom the charge of licensing preachers and ordaining pastors is in our church committed) may be satisfied of the talents and proficiency of every one who offers himself to trial for this sacred service, they must follow the rules laid down by acts of assembly, which with us constitute what may be called the ecclesiastical statute-law. First, for evincing the progress he has made in biblical criticism, he must explain and analyse a passage in the Hebrew psalter, chosen by the presbytery and prescribed to him at a former meeting; he must explain a passage in the Greek New Testament *ad aperturam libri.* He must also compose and read a critical discourse called an *Exercise* on a verse or two of the latter, given him as a text at a former meeting. The passage of scripture selected for this purpose is commonly one in which there is some difficulty, and about the meaning of which commentators and interpreters have been divided. For their satisfaction in regard to his proficiency in sacred history, the second branch of theological study above mentioned, he must, in a Latin Lecture called a *chronological discourse*, give a compendious narrative of the most memorable events of an ecclesiastical nature, which have happened during any century, the presbytery shall have named; or if a discourse be not required, he must undergo an examination in English on the period of history assigned by the presbytery. A specimen of his progress in the first part of the third general branch mentioned may be had, both from the English *homily* on a subject also pre-

scribed, and from the *doctrinal addition*, he must give to the critical exercise. And of his advancement in polemic divinity, which is the other part of that branch, the Latin *exegesis* on a controverted question named to him by the presbytery is manifestly intended as a test. The questionary trial may indeed be applied to all the preceding uses. I may also here observe by the way, how attentive our ecclesiastical legislature has been to stimulate the young divines to the study of the learned languages. There are pieces of trial assigned, as has been observed, with the express view of discovering the candidate's knowledge in Hebrew and Greek; and one of the discourses above mentioned must be composed in Latin. Besides, he must be prepared for defending his thesis, that is, the doctrine maintained in the exegesis, extempore, in that language, according to the scholastic rules of disputations formerly much in vogue, if any person present shall think proper to enter the lists with him. It must be owned, that since the ancient method of disputation by syllogisms in mood and figure, once universally practised in the schools, is become obsolete, it rarely or never happens now, that one chuses to assume the task of impugning the doctrine of the thesis; so entirely is the syllogistic method of disputing in Latin, once thought essential to all the branches of academical education, now abandoned, in all our schools and colleges. But though at present, there is no dispute *viva voce*, on the subject, the exegesis continues to be composed on the old plan, and all the arguments are cast, in one or other of the moulds with which Aristotle's Analytics have furnished us. The other tasks appointed to be prescribed, namely, the

English *Lecture* or exposition of a portion of scripture, and the *popular sermon* are chiefly intended for trying the candidate's abilities in instructing and persuading, and consequently of his fitness for the pulpit. But this belongs to the practical part of our subject, which comes now to be considered.

The duties of a christian pastor may all be comprised under these two heads, instructing and governing. The first of these, from the different ways in which the people may be instructed, admits a subdivision into two, example and teaching. With regard to the first, the duties, in private life, of every christian are materially the same with those of the minister. Love to God and man constitutes the sum of duty in both. For this reason one at first would imagine, that this part of the subject, teaching by example, could admit nothing particular, on account of the precepts as well as of the doctrines of religion being comprehended under the third branch of the former head, the christian system. But as the consideration of the design of the ministerial office affords an additional and strong obligation to the observance of every christian duty, it also in several instances renders a certain delicacy and circumspection necessary in the minister of religion, which as in others it is not expected, so the want of it in others is scarcely attended to or blamed. Every office too, and that of the ministry among the rest, hath, in respect of moral conduct, its advantages and its temptations. To improve the former, and to guard against the latter, are matters of considerable importance in every station; and will infallibly secure the assiduous regards of that man, who is ambitious to acquit himself honourably

and uprightly of the trust reposed in him. And if this holds in general of all offices, we may, on many accounts, justly say, that these are objects, which demand a more special attention from those, whose purpose it is to enter into the sacred function. This branch of my subject I shall call, *propriety of character;* and it is the first thing which claims our notice in what regards the pastoral care. More of our success depends on the observance of it, than the generality of men are aware of. Under this also, we may comprehend private teaching, as occasion offers, in the way of conversation, in visiting sick persons, and others; and in general, all that regards his conduct in the world as a man, in the church as a christian, and in his parish as pastor.

The other method of instructing or edifying his people is by the proper discharge of the public duties of his office, especially catechising, preaching, public worship, and the administration of the sacraments. It must be owned, that by the two particulars last mentioned, a great deal more may be said to be answered, than barely the purpose of instruction. They are also of considerable importance in what concerns the government and discipline of the church. But as I would avoid an over-nice distinction into parts too minute, I choose to comprise them under this head, and to style that talent which is of the utmost consequence for the useful discharge of all the duties above mentioned, *christian eloquence*, which is the second particular to be attended to, in what belongs to the ministerial function.

As to what concerns church government, which is another important branch of the duty of a pastor, es-

pecially in a constitution like ours, wherein not only the removing of scandals is committed to the care of ecclesiastical judicatories, but wherein they are also intrusted with the licensing of preachers, the only legal candidates for the ministry, the ordination of ministers, and, when necessary, the suspension also and deprivation of preachers and ministers, and (at least in what regards the executive part) the supplying of vacant parishes, beside the share they have in ecclesiastical legislation; this comprehensive article may most naturally be divided, from the consideration of the object, purity of manners, and a succession of useful pastors, into these two branches, church discipline, and ordination. Under the last of these, I comprehend not only what is strictly included under that term, but also whatever is preparatory thereto, in the trying and licensing of probationers.

Thus the four particulars that are principally necessary to be understood by us, that we may be qualified for the right discharge of the ministerial office, are, propriety of character, pulpit eloquence, church discipline, and ordination.

Beside these, there is indeed a part of the office of a minister in this country, that is purely of a civil nature, derived from the law of the land, and quite extraneous to the business of a pastor, which in strictness is only what is called the cure of souls. By this secular branch, I mean, the power with which presbyteries are vested by the legislature, in giving decrees, after proper inquiry, against the land-holders concerned, or heritors as we more commonly term them, for the repairing or the rebuilding of churches, manses, and parochial schools, in the taking trial and the ad-

mitting of schoolmasters, in the allotting of glebes, and perhaps some other things of a similar nature. That the presbytery in these matters does not act as an ecclesiastical court is evident, not only from the nature of the thing, but from this further consideration, its not being in these, at least in what relates to churches, manses and glebes, as in all other matters, under the correction of its ecclesiastical superiors, the provincial synod and the national assembly, but under the review of the highest civil judicatory in this country, the Court of Session.

Another kind of civil power committed to presbyteries, is the power of presenting (as some understand the law) to vacant parishes, upon the devolution of the right, by the patron's neglecting to exercise it for six months after the commencement of the vacancy. In this however, our ecclesiastical ideas and our political so much interfere, that the power of issuing out a presentation has never yet, as far as I know, been exerted by any presbytery, in the manner in which it is commonly exerted by lay-patrons, or in the manner in which it was formerly exerted by bishops in this country in the times of episcopacy, or in which it is at present exerted by bishops in Ireland, as well as in the southern part of the island. Presbyteries do commonly, I think, on such occasions, consult the parish, and regulate their conduct in the same manner, as though patronages were not in force by law. I should perhaps add to the aforesaid list of particulars not properly ecclesiastical, the concern which the pastor must take along with the heritors and elders of the parish in the management and disposal of the public charities, also the power of church-judicatories in appointing contribu-

tions for pious uses to be made throughout the churches within their jurisdiction.

The conduct of a minister in regard to the few cases, which in strictness are without the sphere of his spiritual vocation, is, it must be owned, extremely delicate, and not the less so, that in some of the particulars enumerated, as in what regards manses and glebes, he will naturally be considered as a party, from the similarity of situation in which they all are placed, in the very cause in which he must act in the character of a judge. Whether it is a real advantage to us to possess this kind of secular authority, is a question foreign to my present purpose. For my own part I am strongly inclined to think, that if the legislature had made proper provision for supplying parishes and ministers in sufficient churches and manses, by means of the civil magistrate only, it had not been the worse for us. As on the one hand, we should have been freed from temptations to partiality, which will no doubt sometimes influence our judgment as well as that of other men, so on the other hand, we should have been freed from the suspicion and reproach of it, from which the strictest regard to equity and right will not always be sufficient to protect us. And in a character on the purity whereof so much depends, I must say it is of no small consequence, not only that it be unbiassed by any partial regards, but even that it be beyond the remotest suspicion of such a bias.

As the trust however is devolved upon us by the constitution, the most pertinent question is, in what manner it ought to be discharged. The point is not considerable enough to be regarded here as a separate

branch of the office, though it is of so peculiar a nature as to deserve at least the being taken notice of. Every judicious person will admit that a confusion of temporal and spiritual jurisdiction is alike repugnant to the principles of true religion and to those of sound policy. The more sacredly the natural limits of the two offices of magistrate and pastor are preserved, the ends of both will be the better answered. Each indeed has been denominated the minister of God. But the title is applied to them in very different senses. The magistrate is the minister of divine justice, the pastor is the minister of divine grace. The former beareth not the sword in vain, being appointed for the terror of evil doers. The weapons of the latter are not carnal but spiritual. The motives of the first are taken from the present life only, of the second principally from the future. Whilst the one employs compulsion, which affects the body, the other sets on work the gentle powers of persuasion, which captivate the soul. For my own part, I am disposed to think, that there is not only an essential difference, but even a repugnancy in the two characters, which makes that they cannot, without injury to both, be blended in the same person, and will never perfectly be made to coalesce. It certainly more becomes the preacher of the gospel, who is by his office the messenger of peace, to act the part of mediator with the magistrate, than to stand forth as the avenger of secular wrongs. I can indeed conceive such a degree of probity in a human society as to supersede the necessity of all compulsive power. I can figure to myself a community wherein piety and humanity would prove sufficient motives, remorse and shame sufficient checks, a thing which may be imagin-

ed, but cannot reasonably be expected on this earth. But even in such a society, I should not say, that the authority of the magistrate might be safely lodged with the pastor, but that the virtue of the people rendered magistracy itself unnecessary; for of this power we may justly say, what the apostle says of the law, that "it is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and the disobedient." What I have said on this article, it will be observed, militates chiefly, if not solely, against what may be called a coercive power in the ministers of religion, either direct, by seizing the persons and distraining the goods of obnoxious people, or, which in my judgment is still worse, an indirect coercion, by employing ecclesiastical censures as the tools for effecting the same worldly purpose. Thus much only by the way.

I now return from what will be thought perhaps a digression, though very closely connected with my subject, and of considerable importance for conveying a just idea of the nature of this sacred charge. All that concerns government in the pastor with us, in relation to discipline, ordination and civil rights, may be comprehended under this general title, the judicial capacity of the minister; in which case the whole of what relates to the pastoral function, may be branched out into these three, *pulpit-eloquence*, *purity of manners in private life*, and the observance of *propriety in the character of judge*, both in ecclesiastic matters and in civil.

I have in this, and the preceding discourse given a short sketch of the several branches of study, for the better prosecution of which by the candidates for the ministry, professorships of divinity have in this coun-

try been instituted. The plan you see is very large and comprehensive. To do justice to all the parts (and all of them, as hath been observed, are of importance to a minister) would, even though the utmost conciseness were attempted, require a course of many years. What can be effected to any purpose with us, where the time employed in the study is commonly but three or four sessions, and where the attendance in general is so irregular, and so much interrupted, it would be difficult to say.

But whatever relates to the manner in which it will be most conducive to the edification of the students, to treat these several topics from this place, I shall reserve as a subject for my next lecture.

LECTURE III.

In what Manner the Branches of Theology above mentioned ought to be treated.

In the two preceding lectures, I showed at some length what an extensive field of study the theological student has to cultivate. I distributed the whole into two principal parts, the theoretical and the practical. The first I subdivided into three, *biblical criticism*, *sacred history*, and *polemic divinity;* the second also into three, *pulpit-eloquence*, *propriety of conduct in private life*, *propriety also in the public character*, or the judicial capacity, which a minister in this country, and church, is called to act in.

It was reserved as the subject of this discourse, to consider in what manner it will be most conducive to the edification of the students to treat from this place the several topics above mentioned. I acknowledge that, for my own part, I have found this a very puzzling question. A regular attendance for four winters is the utmost that we are entitled to expect from the same set of students. How few are there, comparatively, from whom we can obtain so much? Part, you know, are coming, and part are going, I say not, every year, but every month, and every week, and every day. I might justly be charged with a faulty insensi-

bility, if I did not acknowledge, that for some years past, there has been a considerable change to the better in this respect, and that the endeavors, which have been used for effecting this end, have not been entirely lost labour. But after all, it must be allowed, there is still room for further improvements. Besides, our sessions are short, and though I have endeavoured to make the most of them, and have doubled the number of meetings for my own lectures, the time is, after all, but little, compared with the work. The prelections I am to give shall not be long; for I would fain, if possible, avoid being tedious. I have always considered it, as a good rule, to prefer frequency to length in the instructions that are given to youth. Attention in the earlier part of life, especially to articles of science, which afford not so much entertainment to the fancy, as matter of reflection to the understanding, is soon cloyed; but then, after a little respite, it is soon recruited. It is no better than talking to the deaf, to discourse to hearers whose stock of attention, and consequently of patience, is exhausted. For this reason, as I find it no easy task, so to enliven these topics as to secure a patient and attentive hearing, beyond the time of an ordinary sermon, I intend that these lectures shall not often fall short of half an hour, or exceed three quarters. And this, I am hopeful, will not be thought immoderate on either side. But to return to the particular branches of my subject, or points to be discussed.

Were we in lecturing to confine ourselves entirely to the third branch of the first general head, *polemic divinity*, or the examination of the several parts of the christian system, together with the controversies, to

which every one of these has given occasion; would it be possible, considering the shortness of our sessions, a great part of which must be employed in hearing the exercises of the students, to finish, even in thrice the time that our canons require the students to attend us (and it is well known that these canons have grown into disuse) such a course in a way that would be accounted satisfactory? What then can be done, when so much more than the discussion of that branch is necessary, absolutely necessary, for answering the end of this profession? Who sees not, that the end is not so much to make an acute disputant in theology, as to make a useful minister? I would not be understood to treat contemptuously a talent that is necessary for the defence of truth; but I must say, that in common life, where there is one occasion of exerting that talent, there are twenty occasions of employing the other talents necessary for the right discharge of the pastoral function.

As then the consideration of the other branches must occupy a part of our time, what profitable purpose, it may be asked, will be answered by some detached discourses on a very few particular articles of divinity, the most that the same students will ever have occasion to hear? Can this give so much as an idea, not to say the knowledge, of the harmony, connection, and mutual dependance of the several parts? Could a student in architecture, for instance, ever acquire, I say not skill, but what would be necessary to form a taste in that noble and useful art, by having occasion to hear a few detached prelections, at one time perhaps on the Ionic scroll, and the manner of forming it, at another on the Doric triglyphs, at another on the

foliage of the Corinthian capital ? Many such learned and elaborate discourses might he hear on the beauty and effect of particular ornaments and little parts of an edifice, without ever attaining an ability of judging of the symmetry of the whole, and of the proportions which, in order to produce the best effect in respect both of elegance and of use, the great and constituent members ought to bear to one another. Yet without this he would remain totally ignorant of the art all the while. Now it is certain, that all the knowledge necessary for the attainment of that art, may, when compared with the christian theology, be comprised in a very small compass.

Is then so important a branch as controversial theology to be overlooked altogether ? If not, in what manner is it to be treated, that the end may best be answered? It is not to be overlooked; but in what manner it ought to be conducted with us, (all circumstances considered) is a question, which it is much more difficult to answer. In the digest that might be made of the articles of the christian system, of the disputes that have arisen out of these articles, and of the arguments that have been or might be produced in support of controverted truths and in confutation of pernicious and plausible errors, if it were possible, as it is not, to give such a digest in the time to which we are limited; hardly any thing very new or deserving the pains on the one part, or the attention on the other, which it would certainly cost, could be offered by us. We should be laid under the necessity of giving at best but a very indistinct compilation (because far too much abridged) from the topics and arguments which have been, over and over, fully treated by con-

troversial writers. In so ample a field, therefore, I say not the best thing we can do, but the only thing we can do to any purpose, is to give some directions, first, as to the order in which the student ought to proceed in his inquiries, and secondly, as to the books and assistances which he ought to use. If these directions are properly attended to and followed, it might be hoped, by the right improvement of his leisure hours (and without this improvement the lectures of divinity schools will be of no significance) that a competent knowledge might in a little time be attained; and that, both of all the essential articles of the christian system, and of all the principal controversies that have arisen concerning them.

The same observations nearly might be made in relation to the second branch of the same general head, the *sacred history*. Indeed in some other universities, this is made a separate profession. When that is the case, the professor of divinity hath scope doubtless, for making greater progress in the other branches of the theological studies. But for my part, I am not of opinion, that attending what are commonly called historical lectures, that is, an abridgment of history distributed into lectures, whether the subject be sacred or civil, is the best way of acquiring a sufficiency of knowledge in this branch. I see many disadvantages it has, when compared with reading well written histories, but know not one advantage. Were such a method however more advantageous, when sufficient time is given for prosecuting it, than in my judgment it is, it would not answer with us. Your whole attendance here would not be sufficient for attaining a competency of knowledge on this article; though it

were the only subject ye were to be instructed in from this chair; and though we were to treat it in the most compendious manner possible. Is this branch then to be omitted? By no means. But all that with propriety can be effected by us is, to convey some notion of the nature and origin and essential parts of this species of history, to trace as briefly as possible the latent springs of the principal changes, with which the ecclesiastical history in particular presents us; and as on the last mentioned article, to offer suitable advices to the student, first as to the order in which he ought to proceed in the acquisition of this necessary branch of knowledge; secondly as to the books and assistances which he ought to use.

As to the only remaining branch of the same general head, *biblical criticism*, it will require to be managed in a different manner. It is for this reason I here mention it last, notwithstanding that I gave it the first place in the enumeration of the parts into which the theory of theology may properly be divided. When I speak of biblical criticism as a very considerable branch of the study incumbent on every divine, I would not be understood to mean an acquaintance with many of the commentators, who have criticised upon the sacred text, but principally the acquisition of some general canons in scriptural criticism, especially the criticism of the New Testament, by which we may often be enabled both to judge without the aid of commentaries, and when we shall think it proper to use that aid, to decide between contradictory comments. Now though all the first principles of criticism on the style and idiom of scripture are perhaps to be found scattered in an almost endless variety of volumes, writ-

ten on the subject of the christian religion, they are not to be collected from these without the utmost labour and difficulty. The most of our commentaries, it must be owned, are too bulky for the generality even of theological students. And we are sorry to add (but it is a certain fact) that in several of these commentaries, what is of little or no significancy so immoderately preponderates what is really valuable, that we may almost say of them, as Bassanio in the play says of Gratiano's conversation, "They speak an infinite deal of nothing. Their reasons are as two grains of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff, you shall seek all day ere you find them, and when you have them they are not worth the search." To lay down therefore proper canons of sacred criticism, to arrange them according to their comparative merit, so that we may readily apprehend the way in which they are to be applied, must be a very useful labour to all in general, but of particular consequence to the young student. It is the more so, because could we once arrive at being adepts in the critical science, the help of the commentator would be much more rarely needed; we should serve as commentators to ourselves.

Allow me to add, that this study is the more necessary in a protestant divine, for two reasons. The first is, because the Bible is acknowledged by such to be the foundation, from which alone all that is necessary both to be believed and to be practised by the christian may be learnt. Whatever therefore is subservient to the elucidating of the sacred pages, must be of the utmost consequence to him. The case is very different with the Romanist, who assigns to tradition, to the fathers, to councils, and to popes, an authority

at least co-ordinate with that of the scriptures. The second reason is, the right of private judgment which is as strenuously maintained by all consistent protestants, as it is denied by papists. This makes it the duty even of private christians to devote part of their time to the study of the divine oracles, but much more does it render it the duty of those, who are appointed to be the instructers of the christian people. I intend therefore to enter more particularly into this branch of the subject; and the rather, as by means of this properly understood and improved, the young student may be enabled to enter into the spirit and sentiments of the inspired writers, and may not be led to receive, by a kind of implicit faith, the whole system of christian institutes from the dogmas and decisions of some favourite chief or leader. This method, though but too commonly practised, is unworthy the name of a protestant divine, who by his profession, not only asserts the rights of private judgment, but denies all claim to infallibility in any man or body of men.

So much for the manner wherein, consistently with the time to which we are limited and the multiplicity of things to be attended to, the three branches of the first head, to wit, polemic theology, sacred history and biblical criticism, may most profitably by treated here. I purpose next to consider in what manner we ought to treat the three articles of the second head, relating to the pastoral care, which are, pulpit eloquence, propriety of conduct in private life, propriety likewise in what regards our judicial capacity, which will finish the outline of the whole scheme or course of study intended.

First as to *pulpit eloquence*, it is evident that in this particular, a considerable portion of the talents requir-

ed in the preacher, are such as are necessary to him in common with every other orator. The study of oratory therefore, in the largest acceptation of the word, to every one who purposes to appear in the character of a public speaker, is, though not so much attended to as it deserves, of considerable consequence. This we are warranted to affirm, whatever he intends to make the scene of his public appearances, whether it be the senate, the bar, or the pulpit. Now what the preacher ought to have in common with other and very different professions, it cannot be expected, that in a divinity school we should treat particularly. We do not therefore propose from this place to give an institute of rhetoric, though it will not be improper to give some directions, in relation to the reading both of the ancient and of the modern authors, whence the knowledge of the subject may be had. By a proper application to these, the student will be enabled not only to attain a justness of taste in this noble art, but also to familiarize himself to the several tropes and figures of elocution, and to acquire a readiness in applying the various rules of composition.

But as there are several things, which the christian orator has in common with the other orators above mentioned, there are several things also, highly worthy of his attention, which in the species of eloquence appropriated to the pulpit, are peculiar. Indeed all the kinds mentioned differ in many respects from one another; but the last differs much more from both the former, than either of these differs from the other. Those differences which give such a variety of modifications to eloquence, are originally founded in the character to be sustained by the speaker, or in that of

the hearers, or in the subject of discourse, or in the particular occasion of speaking, or in the effect intended to be produced. They may result from one, more, or all of these. Now what the preacher has peculiar in any of the above mentioned respects, and the influence that such peculiarity ought to have, will, with the justest reason, require a more particular discussion here. It is requisite on a double account; first, it touches directly that species of oratory with which alone we are concerned, the oratory of the pulpit; secondly, this is a species of which we can learn less from books, than we can learn of any other species. Yet even on this point, as ye may well judge from the glimpse ye have already gotten of the plan we mean to follow, we shall be under a necessity of being much more superficial, than would best suit, either with our inclination or with your profit.

The second thing relating to the pastoral care which was mentioned as a branch of our intended plan, is to consider what is necessary in respect of conduct for maintaining that *propriety of character*, which by the common sense of mankind is understood to suit the office of a minister of religion, and which in all human probability will serve best to insure the success of his ministrations. It was observed already, that the office of the ministry, like every other, has its peculiar advantages and its peculiar temptations. With regard to both, I shall consider, first, what those virtues are, of which the very business of a christian pastor requires in particular the cultivation and exertion; secondly, what those vices are, which in a more especial manner tend to obstruct his success; thirdly, what those evils are, to which his very occupation itself may be said in

some respect to expose him. On these things I shall be the more particular, both as they are of the utmost consequence, and as they have been hitherto much overlooked. These will give occasion to canvass some of the most delicate questions that can be moved in regard to the ministerial deportment. The questions I mean, are such as concern christian zeal, matters of offence, the love of popularity and some others, on which it is often very difficult both to discern the just boundaries, and so to confine ourselves within them, as not to transgress either by excess or by defect. We may justly say that no where does the rule of the poet hold more invariably than here,

> Est modus in rebus, sunt certi denique fines
> Quos ultra citraque nequit consistere rectum.

The third and last branch of this general head is what properly regards the *public character* or judicial capacity of the minister. The manner in which we propose to treat this topic, may in a great measure be discovered from what has been already said of the different articles comprehended under it. These are three, discipline, ordination and civil rights. It will be proper to consider each of these separately ; though it will not be necessary on such articles to discourse very copiously. If the principles by which in all these particulars our procedure ought to be directed, are laid down and explained, a great deal must be left to experience, and to that acquaintance with rules and forms, in which time and practice alone can perfect us.

I have now laid before you in this and the two preceding discourses the ground work of my intended plan of teaching. I have shown what are the principal

branches in the study of theology, both of the theoretic part and of the practical. I have also explained to you the method in which I propose to treat the several branches enumerated; being, if not absolutely the best that might be devised, the best that in my judgment can be adopted in our circumstances, and that which upon the whole, considering the disadvantages to which we are subjected, will conduce most to the improvement of my hearers. At the same time, I must declare, that I do not so entirely confine myself to the method here suggested, as not to admit any alteration, which on maturer reflection, I shall judge to be an improvement.

What I have to offer, in regard to the conduct which you my hearers ought to pursue, and the character as students which ye ought to maintain, that ye may profitably prosecute this important study, I reserve for the subject of my next prelection.

LECTURE IV.

Of the Conduct which Students of Divinity ought to pursue.

HAVING in the three former lectures pointed out the principal branches both of the theory of theology, and of the ministerial charge; and having explained to you the method in which I propose to treat both parts of that course, I now proceed, as I signified on the last occasion I had of speaking from this chair, to offer my sentiments in regard to the conduct, which you my hearers ought to pursue, and to the character as students which ye ought to maintain that ye may profitably prosecute this important study.

The scheme, of which I have given you an outline, I would fain, if possible, adjust in such a manner, as that it may be completed in four sessions at the most. My reason for limiting it to this number of sessions, is obviously that the greater part of the students may have occasion, if they will, to hear the whole. No doubt by extending it to six times as many, I might make the course more perfect; but of what consequence would that be, if it were thereby rendered less useful? And less useful it must be, if but a small portion of it can be received by the same set of hearers. Admit that, on the other hand, a few who live in this city and neighbourhood should honour us with their

attendance for a longer period; if the instructions to be given are of real consequence, it will hardly be thought presumptuous to affirm, that, considering the slipperiness of most people's memories, and the length of an interval of four years, those few will not altogether misspend their time in hearing them repeated. When the method of teaching is almost entirely by a course of lectures, unaccompanied with any lessons to be got by heart, there are very few learners, on whose minds a single hearing will make an impression sufficiently strong and durable. I would have you to remember, gentlemen, that it is little, extremely little, that I, or any professor of divinity, can contribute to your instruction, if you yourselves do not strenuously co-operate to promote this end. The most that we have to do, is to serve as monitors to you, to suggest those things which may be helpful for bringing and keeping you in the right track of study, and thus for preventing you, as much as possible, from bestowing your time and pains improperly. Your advancement will, under God, be chiefly imputable to your own diligence and application. Students of divinity are commonly, against the time they enter the theological school, arrived at those years of maturity, when cool reflection begins to operate, when a sense of duty, a regard to character, and an attention to interest rightly understood, prove the most powerful motives. And if there be any here, with whom these motives have no weight, it is a misfortune we cannot remedy. We can only say to such, and we do it most sincerely, that their attendance in this place will be to little purpose, that it were much better for themselves, and probably for the public, that they would employ themselves somewhere

else. Ye cannot here be considered as school-boys. We claim no coercive power over you of any kind. Our only hold of you is by persuasion. And for attaining this hold, our only dependence is on your own discernment and discretion. We proceed on the supposition, that ye are not only willing, but even anxious, to learn something every day, by which ye may advance in fitness for the great end in view.

Will it be pleaded on the other side, that there is no knowledge to be learnt in a divinity school which may not be learnt out of it? Passing what may justly be urged in opposition to this plea, on the advantages resulting from both example and practice in the different exercises, which hardly any reading can supply; and admitting it in the fullest extent, in which any reasonable person will desire, it ought to be remarked, that the same objection lies against all schools and colleges whatever. There are few difficulties, in the way of science, which eminent natural abilities accompanied solely with assiduous application will not surmount. But what then? Such extraordinary talents fall not to the lot of one of a thousand. It is not with geniuses, but with understandings of the middling rate, that we are chiefly concerned. Besides, even where there are uncommon talents, which by their own native force are capable of conquering difficulties insuperable to ordinary and unassisted minds, yet even of such uncommon geniuses we may truly say, that, with proper assistance, the same difficulties would have been surmounted by them more easily and in shorter time. Ye may travel through a country, where ye never were before, though there be no person in your company that knows any better than yourselves, the regions ye

have to traverse, or the cities ye have to visit, or the objects most worthy of attention ye have to observe. But surely ye must acknowledge that it would be an immense advantage to be accompanied in travelling by one who is well acquainted with the country, with every province in it and every considerable town, who could bring you to every place and every object that were deserving of your notice, and conduct you by those roads which would present you with the most extensive prospects. With such an assistant and fellow traveller, it cannot be doubted, but ye might acquire more useful knowledge of the country and of the people in a month, than ye could otherwise do in a year. And it must be owned, that the use of a divinity-school is but ill-answered, if the study be not, by its means, at least facilitated to the learner. A professor of divinity, if he does not usurp what he has no title to, claims no advantage over a student but that which years and experience have given him; an advantage, in which the student in time, if it is not his own fault, may be his equal, perhaps his superior. We demand no attention from you, but such as an experienced mariner would be entitled to from those who are setting out on their first voyage.

And here I cannot help observing, that in the way, in which attendance in the divinity school is still given by some of our students, very little can be expected from it. I know the excuse that is generally produced by students for their great deficiency in this respect. They are engaged in other business, some as preceptors in private families, others in teaching schools. But are excuses like these admitted in students as a sufficient reason for absenting themselves from the inferior

classes? Is their attendance in these dispensed with by the master for the greater part of the philosophy-course? On what a miserable footing would our university education stand, if such a plea as this were to be received as a sufficient apology, and if such a sham attendance, as is sometimes given here by students, were enough to entitle our young collegiates to academical degrees? Every person of discernment must perceive, that on such a plan of procedure, our colleges would quickly go to wreck, and our schools be shut up, because they would infallibly lose all credit and utility. Now I would fain be informed what valid reason can be produced, why this plea should rather be admitted here? Is any branch of philosophy of equal importance to one who is intended for the ministry, as those branches of theology are, which we have shown to be immediately connected with, and preparatory to the sacred function? Or is it fit that there should be less caution in regard to the preparation for holy orders than is thought necessary for attaining the degree of master of arts? It is manifest that our church did not think so, when those statutes were enacted by her, which regard the licensing of probationers, and the ordaining of pastors. But those statutes, though they still remain unrepealed, are greatly relaxed by the manner we have got of executing them. These things well deserve your serious and mature consideration.

Permit me further to recommend to you a punctual attendance on the professors of the oriental languages. I have assigned the reasons of this recommendation in a former discourse, and I hope they will be found satisfactory. I am the more emboldened to urge your attention to this recommendation at present, as I can

say with truth that, in my memory, there was never such an opportunity, in this part of the world, of being thoroughly instructed in the oriental languages, as there is now. As the knowledge of these is of great and undoubted consequence to those who would make themselves masters of the christian theology, the opportunity you have at this time ought not to be neglected. I appeal to yourselves, I appeal to common sense, whether there be not an impropriety, not to say an absurdity in this, that a person should be by office the interpreter of a book, which he himself cannot read without an interpreter. And such surely is every one, who cannot read any part of his bible in the original, but must have recourse to translations. Ye know that a specimen of your proficiency in the Hebrew is a part of the trials ye must undergo, before ye be licensed to preach the gospel. It is however too notorious to be dissembled, that this part of trial is often artifically eluded, and through the excessive indulgence of presbyteries, that artifice, though perceived, is overlooked. But I must say, there is at least a meanness in having recourse to any thing that savours so grossly of disingenuity to which a candid mind will not easily submit. What person, I say not of genuine piety, but of liberal sentiments, can bear to avow even to his own heart in secret, that his only aim is just to obtain as much knowledge as will carry him through the trials, so that he may get into a living; and that about every thing else he is indifferent? I persuade myself, gentlemen, that ye all view the matter in a very different light; and that it is your great aim, that ye may be qualified for discharging in such a manner the duties of the holy ministry, when it shall please Providence to call you to

the office, as may redound to the service of your master, and the benefit of your fellow creatures. I am certain, this is the only way of doing it with honour to yourselves. I do not expect that ye should all become critics in the oriental tongues. That can be the attainment of but a few. But I may and do expect, that ye should know as much of the Hebrew, as to be capable of forming a judgment concerning the justness of the criticisms that have been made by others; and that when ordained pastors yourselves, ye may in your turn be qualified to take trial of the knowledge of those who shall then come to be candidates for the ministry. And I believe it will be admitted, that a man must be in a very awkward situation, who is obliged by his profession to take trial of another's knowledge in a subject, of which he is totally ignorant himself.

I must also insist upon it, that ye be at some pains in improving yourselves in Greek and Latin. Ye know the former is the language of one essential part of the scriptures, and that part which is in particular the foundation of the christian faith. With regard to the other, it hath been long the universal language of the learned, insomuch that in this, as well as in every other literary profession, one can make but very little progress without it.

In short, we may say with truth of all the branches of a liberal education, and of history and philosophy in particular, that on all occasions they are ornamental to the character of a minister, and on many occasions may prove greatly useful. Ye ought not therefore to make a light account of those sciences in which ye have been instructed, or think ye have now no more to do with them. So far from allowing yourselves to lose

any thing of what ye have already acquired, ye ought to be daily improving your stock of knowledge. Of some branches of study, young men, after finishing their philosophical course, often have the acquisition to begin. Of this sort is civil history, which, especially the ancient oriental, as well as Greek and Roman histories, are of considerable importance here, inasmuch as they have a pretty close connexion and are in some particulars closely interwoven with the scriptural and ecclesiastic histories; and these ye know make a principal branch of your subject. Sacred history and profane serve reciprocally to throw light on each other. I may add that historical knowledge is of immense use in criticism, from the acquaintance to which it introduces us, with ancient manners, laws, rites and idioms. These things I only mention as it were in passing. No doubt from the diversity of geniuses and tastes there is in human nature, one of you will incline more to one study, and another to another. And it is right it should be so. In those branches of knowledge which do not immediately belong to our profession, though they may have a connexion with it, I do not mean to give any particular directions; I only mean to say in general that it will be neither for your honour, nor for your interest that they be altogether laid aside. But a proper appetite for knowledge is here all in all. What Isocrates said on this subject so pertinently to Demonicus, I say to every one of you, Εαν ης φιλομαθης εση πολυμαθης. If you love learning, you will be learned. If on the contrary you read and study more through a sort of constraint, than through choice, you will never arrive at eminence.

OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY.

LECTURE I.

Of the Study of Natural Religion, and of the Evidences of Christianity.

I OBSERVED in general, when laying down the method of prosecuting my plan, that were I in lecturing from this place to confine myself entirely to this branch of the theoretic part, on which I am now to enter, the examination of the christian scheme, together with the controversies to which the several members of it have given rise, considering the shortness of our sessions, it would be impossible in twice the number of years, that our ecclesiastical canons require our students to attend us, (and it is well known that even these canons have grown into disuse) to finish such a course in a manner that would be satisfactory. What then can be done, when so much more than the discussion of that branch is necessary, absolutely necessary, for answering the end of this profession? Who sees not that the end is not so much to make an acute disputant as to make an useful minister? I do not mean to treat slightly a talent that is necessary for the defence of truth; but I must say, that in common life, where there is one occasion of exerting that talent, there are twenty occasions of employing the other talents necessary for the

right discharge of the pastoral function. As then the consideration of the other branches must occupy a part of our time, what profitable purpose, it may be asked, will be answered, by some detached discourses on a very few points of divinity, the most that the same students could ever have occasion to hear? Could this give so much as an idea, not to say the knowledge of the harmony, connection and mutual dependence of the whole? Is then so important a branch as polemic divinity to be entirely overlooked? and if not, in what manner is it to be treated that the end may best be answered? It is by no means to be entirely overlooked; but in what manner it ought to be conducted (all circumstances considered, both as to the time allowed for the study, and the other matters equally essential to be discussed) is a question much more difficult to answer. In the digest that may be made of the articles both of natural and of revealed religion, if it were possible, as it is not, within the compass of the few sessions to which the attendance of students is commonly limited, to comprehend such a digest, together with the arguments that may be warrantably urged, not only in confirmation of the whole in general, but in support of all the principal controverted points, hardly any thing either new or curious could be offered by us. We should be laid under the necessity of giving at best but a very indistinct, and therefore a bad compilation, because by far too much abridged, from the topics and arguments which have been fully treated by various controversial writers. In so ample a field therefore, I say not, the best thing we can do, but the only thing we can do, that will answer any useful purpose, is to give directions, both as to the order in which the

student ought to proceed in his inquiries, and as to the books or assistances he ought to use. If these directions are properly attended to by him, and if they are followed by the right improvement of his leisure hours (and without this improvement the lectures of divinity halls will be of no significancy) it may be hoped, that a competent knowledge might in a little time be attained, both of the evidences of our religion, of its essential articles, and of all the principal controversies that have arisen concerning them.

But first, as to the order in which our theological inquiries ought to be conducted, it may not be improper to observe here in the entry, that religion hath been often and not unaptly divided into natural and revealed. The former of these, subdivides itself into other two parts, namely what concerns the nature and providence of God, and what concerns the duties and prospects of man. The first of these is commonly called *natural theology;* the second *ethics*, both comprised under the science of *pneumatology*, whereof they are indeed the most sublime and most important parts; and which science is itself a branch of philosophy, in the largest acceptation of the word, as importing the interpretation of nature. That to a certain degree the knowledge of divine attributes and of human obligations are discoverable by the light of nature, scripture itself always presupposeth. As to the former, "The heavens," we are told, "declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handywork." Again, "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power, and godhead." Nay our methods of arguing on this subject from the effect to the

cause, scripture itself disdains not to adopt and authenticate. "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see?" And as to the latter, the duties incumbent on men, our Bible in like manner informs us that "when the Gentiles who have not the (written) law do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law are a law to themselves; who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another." Now in strictness of speech neither natural theology nor moral philosophy, nor (which is also some times comprehended under the same general name) the doctrines of the immateriality and natural immortality of the soul, fall within my province as a teacher of christian theology. They are in fact preliminary studies, and constitute a part of the philosophic course.

It is however necessary, in order both to prevent mistakes and to obviate objections, to observe, that I do by no means intend to insinuate, that these studies are unconnected with the christian system and therefore unnecessary. On the contrary I think them of the utmost consequence. As it is the same God (for there is no other) who is the author of nature and the author of revelation, who speaks to us in the one by his works, and in the other by his spirit, it becomes his creatures reverently to hearken to his voice, in whatever manner he is pleased to address them. Now the philosopher is by profession the interpreter of nature, that is of the language of God's works, as the christian divine is the interpreter of scripture, that is of the language of God's spirit. Nor do I mean to signify, that there is not in many things a coincidence in the

discoveries made in these two different ways. The conclusions may be the same, though deduced, and justly deduced, from different premises. The result may be one, when the methods of investigation are widely different. There is even a considerable utility in pursuing both methods, as what is clear in the one may serve to enlighten what is obscure in the other. And both have their difficulties and their obscurities. The most profound philosopher will be the most ready to acknowledge that there are phænomena in nature for which he cannot account; and that divine, you may depend upon it, whatever be his attainments, hath more arrogance, than either knowledge or wisdom, who will not admit, that there are many texts in scripture which he cannot explain. Nor does this in the least contradict the protestant doctrine of the perspicuity of sacred writ; for though every thing which proceeds from God, it must be of consequence to us to be acquainted with, and therefore requires diligent attention especially from the minister of his word, yet all the truths revealed are not of equal consequence, as we learn from scripture itself. The most important things are still the plainest, and set in the greatest variety of lights. Now if God is pleased to address us in two different languages, neither of which is without its difficulties, we may find considerable assistance in comparing both for removing the difficulties of each. But though, as I observed, natural theology and ethics are strictly the province of the philosopher, it may not be amiss, to suggest in a few words concerning the former, that the use of reading elaborate demonstrations of the being and perfections of God, is more perhaps to fix our attention on the object, than to give convic-

tion to the understanding. The natural evidences of true theism are among the simplest, and at the same time the clearest deductions from the effect to the cause. And it were to be wished, that the subject had not been rather perplexed, than facilitated, by the abstruse and metaphysical discussions, in which it hath been sometimes involved.

But to come to the proper department of the christian divine, the first inquiry, that occurs on this subject, is concerning the truth, or, which in the present case is precisely the same, the divinity of our religion. The grand question, to adopt the scripture idiom, is no other than this, Is the doctrine which Jesus Christ preached, from heaven, or of men? That it is from heaven, is the avowed belief of all his disciples; that it is of men, is on the contrary the declared opinion of Jews and pagans. The Mahometans, indeed, acknowledge its divine original, but as they at the same time maintain, that we have no standard of that religion now existing, the scriptures both Jewish and Christian being totally corrupted, in their account, even in the most essential matters, we are under a necessity of classing them also with the infidels of every other denomination. Would we know in what manner the truth of our religion may be most successfully defended let us consider in what way it hath been most strenuously attacked. Upon a careful examination of all the multifarious assaults that have been made by argument against the christian institution by its adversaries, they are almost all reducible to these two classes. They are either attempts against the character of the institution itself, and are produced to evince that it is unworthy of God, and unsuitable to those original sentiments of right and

wrong which we derive from natural conscience; or they are levelled against the positive proofs of revelation, and propose to invalidate its evidence. In the first the subject may be said to be considered as a question of *right*, in the second as a question of *fact*. Accordingly objections of the former kind are properly philosophical, of the latter historical, and critical.

As to those of the class first mentioned, upon the most impartial examination I have ever been able to make of them, I have always found, that the much greater part proceeded from a total misapprehension of the subject. The spirit of the church, or rather of churchmen, of the hierarchy, hath been mistaken for the spirit of the gospel; and the absurd glosses of corrupt and fallible men have been confounded with the pure dictates of the divine oracles. To the candid and intelligent inquirer, there will appear in many of the boasted arguments produced by the most renowned champions in the deistical controversy, a manifest *ignoratio elenchi*, as the logicians term it. And I will take upon me to say, that an intimate acquaintance with the mind of the spirit as delivered in holy writ, in its native simplicity and beauty, unadulterated by the traditions and inventions of men, will do more to dissipate the clouds raised by such objectors, than whole torrents of scholastic chicane and sophistry. And even in those objections, in which we cannot say there is a mistake of the subject, we shall often find a woful mistake of the natural powers and faculties of man. Nor do I know a better method of answering cavils of this nature, than that which has been so successfully employed by Bishop Butler in his admirable treatise entitled, "The Analogy of Religion natural and revealed to the Con-

stitution and Course of Nature." Now as a great many of the arguments of our sceptics and unbelievers are aimed against the genius and character of our religion, so on the other hand it is proper to observe, that to some persons of the most acute discernment and most delicate sensibility, there has appeared in this same subject the character of religion, an intrinsic but irresistible evidence of its divinity. The spirit it breathes, the doctrines it teaches, the morals it inculcates, when candidly examined in the fountain, the New Testament, and not in the corrupted streams of human comments and systems, have an energy which no feeling heart can withstand, and which seems not to have been withstood by some who have even dared to combat all its other evidences. Of this the late Rousseau is an eminent example.

As to the second class of objections, which are levelled against the external proofs of revelation, they differ according to the different branches of evidence against which they are aimed. The two principal branches of external evidence, by which the christian doctrine is recommended to our faith, are *prophecy* and *miracles*. The latter of these were strongly urged by the apostles for the conviction of the Gentiles; both were insisted on in their reasonings with the Jews. The pagans knew nothing of those books in which the prophecies were contained, and consequently arguments drawn from these would have been unintelligible to them. Now as the miracles which were wrought in support of our religion, with us stand on the evidence of testimony conveyed in history, and as the fulfilment of most of the prophecies urged in support of the same cause, are vouched to us in the same manner, the argument with

regard to miracles is entirely, and with regard to prophecy is in a great measure of the historical kind. I say with regard to prophecy it is only in a great measure historical. My reason for making the distinction is plainly this. The prophetic style hath something peculiar in it. It is both more figurative, and more obscure, than that of simple narration. Whereas therefore with regard to the performance of such a miracle, there can be only one question, and a mere question of fact; with regard to the accomplishment of such a prophecy, there naturally arise two questions. First, is the meaning of the prophecy such as hath been assigned to it? This is a question of criticism; secondly, Was the event, by which it is said to be accomplished, such as is alleged? This again is a question of fact. Before I dismiss this topic of the different ways wherein the truth of revelation has been assailed by its adversaries, it is necessary to take notice of an intermediate method, by which indeed the external proofs are struck at, but in a different manner. It is not the reality of individual facts alleged, namely miracles and prophecies, but the possibility of the kind, as being supernatural, which is made the question. Again, the fitness of these, though admitted true, to serve as evidence of doctrine, hath been also questioned. Both these inquiries are of the philosophic kind. Their solution depends on a just apprehension of the nature of evidence.

Would I, now, that ye should be particularly acquainted with all the trite and all the novel topics, that have been, or are insisted on by the enemies of our religion, and that ye should read and remember exactly all the most approved answers that have been made.

by its defenders; I should in that case be under a necessity of assigning you a very frightful task, sending you to consult an innumerable multitude of volumes, written on both sides of the question. And should any of you happen to be blest with a tenacious memory, he might in this way at very little expense of judgment, be qualified for encountering any ordinary caviller he might meet with. But in truth, the task is in my opinion, especially for a novice in theology, both too laborious and unpleasant, and by no means sufficiently profitable to recompense the time and pains that would be bestowed upon it. And though I think that such controversial pieces may be perused occasionally as they fall in one's way, I would by no means recommend a regular prosecution of this study; a method which would tend only to form a habit of turning every thing into matter of wrangling and logomachy, those noxious weeds, those briars and thorns with which almost all the walks of theology have been so unhappily pestered. In my judgment, a habit of this kind greatly hurts the rational powers, when in appearance it only exercises them; it doth worse, it often greatly injures an ingenuous and candid temper; it infects one with a rage of disputation, the cacoethes of pedants; it inclines the mind to hunt more for the specious than the solid, and in the ardour of the combat to sacrifice truth to victory. Not that I would dissuade any one, who may have doubts of his own, to consult impartially whatever authors may be of use to remove them, and to examine the question freely. It is not truth, but error, that shuns the light, and dreads to undergo an impartial trial. It is the liberal advice of an apostle "Prove all things, hold fast that which

is good," an advice which breathes nothing of that narrow, jealous, sectarian spirit, which hath so long and so generally prevailed among christians of all denominations, and hath proved the greatest pest of the cause. Or in case one's situation exposes him to the attacks of wranglers, it may be necessary also on this account to furnish himself with armour where he soonest can, that he may neither be seduced by their sophisms, nor give them the appearance of a triumph at the expense of truth. But where neither of these is the case, I am not satisfied that this summary way of proceeding is the best. Would you then have the theological student to neglect this most important question, concerning the truth of revelation, the foundation of all the rest? By no means. I dissuade only from his taking this hasty way of overloading his memory with the productions of others, and with all the trash that has been hatched in disputatious idle heads. I only dissuade from this, that I may indicate the method whereby he may be enabled to search the cause itself to the bottom, and if possible to produce something of his own.

It was observed, that some of the arguments against revelation were of a philosophic nature, deriving, or at least pretending to derive their efficacy from the sources of pneumatology, logic, ethics, and natural theology; others of an historical nature, and others critical. Let us therefore become acquainted with these several sources, pneumatology, history, criticism, and we shall not need to see with other's eyes, and to retail by rote the answers that have been given by others. We shall be qualified to see with our own eyes, and to give answers for ourselves, arising from

our own knowledge and distinct apprehension of the subject. But this, it will be said, is assigning us by much the harder task of the two. The streams are open and at hand, the fountain is often remote and hidden from our view. True indeed, and therefore without doubt it will be longer before we reach it, but when we have reached it, our work is done; whereas the streams are numberless, every day discovers some unknown before, and to examine them all severally is endless. And though the task were possible, it would not be near so satisfactory to the mind.

It has been the error of ages, and still is of the present age, that to have read much is to be very learned. There is not, I may say, a greater heresy against common sense. Reading is doubtless necessary, and it must be owned, that eminence in knowledge is not to be attained without it. But two things are ever specially to be regarded on this topic, which are these. First, that more depends on the quality of what we read, than on the quantity; secondly, more depends on the use, which by reflection, conversation, and composition we have made, of what we read, than upon both the former. In whatever depends upon history, or the knowledge of languages, the materials indeed can only be furnished us by reading; but if that reading be properly conducted and improved, its influence will be very extensive. Whilst therefore it is by far the too general cry, "Read, read, commentators, systematists, paraphrasts, controvertists, demonstrations, confutations, apologies, answers, defences, replies, and ten thousand other such like;" I should think the most important advice to be, "Devoutly study the scriptures themselves, if you would

understand their doctrine in singleness of heart." Get acquainted with the sacred history, in all its parts, Jewish, canonical, ecclesiastic. Study the sacred languages, observe the peculiarities of their diction. Attend to the idiom of the Hebrew, and of the ancient Greek translation, between which and the style of the New Testament there is a great affinity. Study the Jewish and ancient customs, polity, laws, ceremonies, institutions, manners, and with the help of some knowledge in natural theology and the philosophy of the human mind, you will have ground to believe, that, with the blessing of God, ye shall in a great measure serve as commentators, controvertists, systematists, and in short, every thing to yourselves. Without these helps, you are but bewildered and lost in the chaos of contradictory comments and opposite opinions. On the contrary, overlooking all cavils for a time, pursue the track now pointed out, and as the light from its genuine sources above mentioned breaks in upon you, the objections, like the shades of night, will vanish of themselves. Many of those objections you will discover to be founded in an ignorance of human nature and of the nature of evidence, many in an ignorance of that which is the subject of debate, the genius, the doctrine, the precepts of revelation. You will find, that many doughty combatants, who have imagined they have been performing wonders for the subversion of the cause of Christ, have been wasting all their ammunition against the traditions and inventions of men, and that the pure institution of Jesus is not one jot affected by their argument. Patience therefore we would recommend to the young student in regard to particular cavils against religion, till once

he is provided of a fund of his own from which he may be enabled to perceive their futility and to refute them. The only just exceptions to this rule are those already mentioned. When objections are obtruded on him, which tend to unsettle his own mind, or which, if he is incapable of answering or eluding, may afford matter of triumph to infidelity, then it is proper to recur to the nearest methods of removing them.

But some perhaps will be ready to urge, Is not this method of yours rather preposterous? Ought we not first to be satisfied of the truth of revelation, and then enter on the examination of its contents? Its divine origin therefore is doubtless the first question, its particular doctrines come next. This to a superficial inquirer must appear plausible, but it is by no means just. It was observed already, that one principal source of evidence, either in favour of revelation or against it, is its own character, and this we call the intrinsic evidence. To take the most effectual methods therefore of coming at the knowledge of its character, that is, of discovering what it contains, is in fact to take the most effectual method of studying one principal fund of evidence, either for or against it. Again, in regard to the attacks that are made upon christianity, it is impossible we should judge, whether they be just or unjust, till we have gotten some notion of what christianity is. This is the more necessary as we see under this identical name, things in many respects widely different, are in different places attacked. The infidel has not quite the same object in England as in Spain, nor in Sweden as in either, nor in Switzerland as in any of the three. The case is, every assailant attaches to the name all the religious opinions generally received

in the place where he resides. But if it is the institution of Christ, of the truth of which we are anxious to be ascertained, and not the glosses of our rabbies; if it is the commandments of God which excite our zeal, and not the traditions of the elders or the establishment of our legislators, it is necessary we should know before we enter on the controversy, how to make the distinction between the one and the other. This is not the only cause, though indeed it is the chief one, wherein a great deal of time and pains is worse than idly wasted, which would have been spared, if the parties had understood sufficiently the subject in debate. I shall illustrate this by a familiar example. Suppose one should undertake to prove to you, that the constitution of Great Britain is a very bad constitution in every respect. Could you imagine yourselves qualified for judging of the validity of his arguments, if you were yourselves quite ignorant, what that constitution is? You might be liable to be imposed upon by the grossest falsehoods and the vilest misrepresentations, which the bare study of that constitution itself might be sufficient to detect, and might serve abundantly to supply the place of every refutation. The method I recommend, therefore, is in fact the simplest and the most natural. It will at once, and by the same exertion on your part, instruct you in the contents and in some of the principal evidences of revelation, and thus it will both facilitate and shorten your inquiries.

To this, let me add, it is the method which I have, in my own experience, found to answer best. I very early endeavoured to become acquainted with the scriptures, which, from my first perusal, I saw merited a very close attention, though viewed in no higher light

than as human compositions, but much more, as claiming the character of divine revelation. As I became acquainted with the original languages, and with ancient oriental usages and manners, I applied my knowledge in these, for removing obscurities and doubts, where they occurred in scripture. In some cases, I thought I succeeded, in others not. As to the last, I was not impatient, not doubting, but as the light of knowledge advanced, I should see farther and more distinctly. I can say with truth, I was not entirely disappointed. I soon after attempted the reading of controversial writers, and first, those which regard the general controversy, whether the scriptures contain a revelation from God, or, which amounts to the same, whether christianity be a divine communication to mankind, or a mere human figment. I began with the attacks made upon our religion, as I made it a rule to hear the plea of a party first in his own language, and not in the words of an angry and perhaps uncandid antagonist. After reading an attack, if there was any thing specious in it, I considered with myself, how I should answer the principal arguments, if urged upon me by an adversary with a view to discredit religion, or if they were proposed as difficulties by a friend, who intended only the removal of his own doubts. If I found myself puzzled by the arguments, not being satisfied with any answer which occurred to myself, I had recourse, as soon as possible, to the best I could hear of from others. But it sometimes happened, on the contrary, that, on a little reflection, I thought myself able to refute the antagonist's arguments, in which case I never inquired about any answers that might have been published. In consequence

of this method I have read many more attacks upon revelation than defences of it. I carried this so far once, as to set about the publication of an answer* to a very subtle attack on the christian religion by a late celebrated metaphysician, before I had an opportunity of perusing the work of any former answerer; a conduct which I would not recommend to any body's imitation, as it exposes one to mistakes and misrepresentations, which may be easily avoided. I shall further add on this article, that the only species of assault made against revelation, which is totally independent of its contents and history and therefore may be previously studied and understood, is that which is aimed against the possibility of all miraculous facts. This question is purely abstract and metaphysical, and would be the same, it must be owned, whatever the history, character or genius of our religion were.

So much for the subject in general, the different kinds of proof of which it is susceptible, and the different sorts of objections to which it is exposed. So much also for the best method of preparing ourselves for understanding the subject, with its evidence, and for refuting the objections. I shall in my next discourse consider, how we may most profitably pursue our inquiries into the different parts of the subject, and examine the controversies which these have given rise to.

* The Dissertation on Miracles in answer to Mr. Hume

LECTURE II.

Of the Christian System.....the Scriptures ought to be the first study... afterwards Systems and Commentaries may be occasionally consulted... bad consequence of beginning the study of Theology with Systems and Commentaries.

I NOW proceed to the consideration of the parts of the christian system, and the controversies that have been carried on concerning the explication of these by different sects of christians. As method tends both to accelerate and to facilitate our progress in every discussion, it will naturally occur to every considerate person, that some methodical digest of the tenets and precepts contained in our Bible would be at least a matter of great conveniency. That it is not of absolute necessity we may warrantably conclude from this undeniable fact, that there neither is any such digest in scripture, nor was there in the church in the earliest and purest times. But on the other hand these considerations are no arguments against its utility. God, in the economy of grace, as in the economy of nature, supplies man with all the materials necessary for his support and well being, but at the same time requires the exercise of those faculties with which he hath endowed him, for turning those materials to the best account. Thus much may be said in apology for sys-

tem makers of different denominations, many of whom I doubt not have intended well, whose success in this department we cannot at all admire. So it is however, that we have great plenty of systems in many things flatly contradicting one another, all pretending to be founded on, or at least conformable to the doctrine of holy writ. Amid such variety how is the young student to proceed? Must he begin with adopting implicitly one of these pretended treasuries of christian doctrine, studying assiduously both the theoretic part and the practical as the standard of truth, as the very quintessence of our divine institution; must he learn from it and from such commentators as are coincident in their religious sentiments, to understand the scriptures, to ascertain the sense of every thing that appears ambiguous, to solve every thing that is difficult, and to enlighten every thing that is obscure? On the other hand, what security shall our young pupil have, that the guide who has been assigned to him is equal to the office? How shall he know that he is not following the train of a mere ignis fatuus, instead of the direction of a heavenly luminary? You cannot say, he may arrive at this knowledge from scripture, for by the hypothesis, which is indeed conformable to the general practice almost every where, the young student is from this teacher to learn to understand the scripture, not from scripture to learn to judge of this teacher; for were this last to be the case, he must be previously acquainted with the mind of the spirit as manifested in the scriptures, and not take the mind of the spirit on the word of his teacher.

Ay, but the teacher we assign him, say they, is celebrated for knowledge and piety, and is of great repu-

tation among the orthodox as an orthodox divine. As to his knowledge and piety, are we to sustain ourselves perfect judges of these accomplishments, or have not pedantry and hypocrisy sometimes imposed even upon the generality of men? But admitting that the character you give him were in both respects perfectly just, do even these qualifications, however valuable, secure a man against error either in doctrine or practice? Have not several, whom in charity we are bound to think both knowing and pious, maintained in many instances opposite opinions, each extremely positive as to his own, and extremely zealous in defence of it? And as to orthodox, I should be glad to know the meaning of the epithet. Nothing, you say, can be plainer. The orthodox are those who in religious matters entertain right opinions. Be it so. How then is it possible I should know who they are that entertain right opinions, before I know what opinions are right? I must therefore unquestionably know orthodoxy, before I can know or judge who are orthodox. Now to know the truths of religion, which you call orthodox, is the very end of my inquiries, and am I to begin these inquiries on the presumption, that without any inquiry I know it already? Besides, is this thing which you call orthodoxy, a thing in which mankind are universally agreed, insomuch that it would seem to be entitled to the privilege of an axiom or first principle to be assumed without proof? Quite the reverse. There is nothing about which men have been, and still are, more divided. It has been accounted orthodox divinity in one age, which hath been branded as ridiculous fanaticism in the next. It is at this day deemed the perfection of orthodoxy in one country, which in

an adjacent country is looked upon as damnable heresy. Nay in the same country hath not every sect a standard of their own? Accordingly when any person seriously uses the word, before we can understand his meaning, we must know to what communion he belongs. When that is known, we comprehend him perfectly. By the orthodox he means always those who agree in opinion with him and his party, and by the heterodox those who differ from him. When one says then, of any teacher whatever, that all the orthodox acknowledge his orthodoxy, he says neither more nor less than this, "all who are of the same opinion with him, of which number I am one, believe him to be in the right." And is this any thing more, than what may be asserted by some person or other, of every teacher that ever did or ever will exist? "Words," it was well said by a philosopher of the last age, "are the counters of wise men and the money of fools." And when they are contrived on purpose to render persons parties or opinions the objects of admiration or of abhorrence, the multitude are very susceptible of the impression intended to be conveyed by them, without entering at all, or ever inquiring into the meaning of the words. And to say the truth, we have but too many ecclesiastic terms and phrases, which savour grossly of the arts of a crafty priesthood, who meant to keep the world in ignorance, to secure an implicit faith in their own dogmas, and to intimidate men from an impartial inquiry into holy writ.

But would you then lay aside systems altogether, as useless or even dangerous? By no means. But I am not for beginning with them. I am even not for entering on their examination, till one has be-

come in the way formerly recommended, if not a critic, at least a considerable proficient in the scripture. 'Tis only thus, we can establish to ourselves a rule by which we are to judge of the truth or falsehood of what they affirm. 'Tis only thus, that we bring systems to be tried at the bar of scripture, and not scripture to be tried at their's. 'Tis only thus we can be qualified to follow the advice of the prophet in regard to all teachers without exception, "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, they have no truth in them." 'Tis only thus, we can imitate the noble example set us by the wise Bereans, in exact conformity to the prophet's order, of whom we learn, that they did not admit the truth of Christ's doctrine even on the testimony of his apostles, but having candidly heard what they said, "searched the scriptures daily to see if these things were so." 'Tis only thus, we can avoid the reproach of calling other men καθηγηται masters, leaders, dictators, to the manifest derogation of the honour due to our only master, leader and dictator, Christ. 'Tis only thus, we can avoid incurring the reproach thrown upon the Pharisees, concerning whom God says, "their fear towards me is taught by the precepts of men."

But then it will be said, if the scriptures are to be our first study, will it not be necessary, that, even in reading them, we take the aid of some able commentator? Perhaps I shall appear somewhat singular in my way of thinking, when I tell you in reply, that I would not have you at first recur to any of them. Do not mistake me, as though I meant to signify, that there is no good to be had from commentaries. I am

far from judging thus of commentaries in general, any more than of systems. But neither are proper for the beginner, whose object it is impartially to search out the mind of the spirit, and not to imbibe the scheme of any dogmatist. Almost every commentator hath his favourite system, which occupies his imagination, biasses his understanding, and more or less tinges all his comments. The only assistances, which I would recommend, are those in which there can be no tendency to warp your judgment. It is the serious and frequent reading of the divine oracles, accompanied with fervent prayer; it is the comparing of scripture with scripture; it is the diligent study of the languages in which they are written; it is the knowledge of those histories and antiquities to which they allude. These indeed will not tell you what you are to judge of every passage, and so much the better. God hath given you judgment, and requires you to exercise it. "And why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?" If sufficient light is brought to you, and if you have eyes wherewith to see, will ye not take the trouble to use them, and observe what is before you; must you be told every thing as though you were blind or in utter darkness? The helps therefore, which I recommend, are such as pronounce nothing concerning the import of holy writ, but only increase the light by means of which the sense may be discovered. The student I would have in a great measure to be self-taught, a well conducted attempt at which, is, in my opinion, the true way of preparing himself for being taught of God. Whoever thinks that this method will not do, ought openly and honestly to disclaim the principle, that "the scriptures

are able to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Such a one on the contrary hath in effect, whatever he may imagine, abandoned the protestant doctrine of the perspicuity and absolute sufficiency of scripture. He hath not entirely purged out the old leaven, but retains a hankering after some human and unerring interpreter. If he differs with Rome, it is not really about the needfulness of the office, but about the person or persons who shall fill it.

Let us consider a little the consequences of the other method, which indeed is by far the most common, not only with papists but even with protestants of all denominations, and which I would call beginning our theological studies where they should end, with systems and commentaries. To what other cause can we justly impute it, that so much of implicit faith, so much of unrelenting bigotry, and so many divisions prevail in the christian world, especially among the pastors themselves, those who ought to be the foremost in propagating more liberal sentiments of the Gospel of Christ? The young student new come from college, where he was taken up with other matters, enters on the study of theology quite raw and unexperienced. He is told, if a protestant, that the whole of his religion is contained in the Bible; and even, if a Romanist, he is informed that the scriptures are inspired and consequently true, and that they contain many at least of the christian doctrines. The foundation is laid by some favourite system of the party to which he belongs, which is warmly recommended by him who has the direction of his studies. When that is done, he is desirous to commence the study of holy

writ. He begins, and as may be naturally expected, being quite a stranger to the character of the nation, to whom the sacred writers belonged and of whom they write, knowing nothing of their polity, laws, customs, manners, ceremonies, to which there are so frequent allusions, and having but a smattering of the sacred languages, and nothing of the idiom, he is often puzzled to find out the sense. If his former reading do him no prejudice, it is well; much good is not to be expected from it. Impatient to get rid of his perplexity, and to know every thing as he proceeds, some expositor must be consulted. An expositor will be got that shall corroborate the effect produced by the system. If the place of his residence be Rome, one interpreter is put into his hands; if it happen to be Moscow, another; if Oxford, a third; if London, a fourth; and if Geneva, very probably one who differs in his sentiments from all the four. Having no criterion of his own, whereby he can form a judgment of the justness of their interpretation, and having an unbounded trust in the wisdom of his tutor, and the penetration of the authors he has recommended, he easily adopts in every thing their explications and solutions. His vacant mind, like what the lawyers call a *derelictum*, is claimed in property by the first occupant. That author, and others of the same party, commonly keep possession ever after. To the standard set up by them, every passage in scripture must by all the arts of distorting, mutilating, torturing be made conformable, and by the same standard all other authors and interpreters must be pronounced good or bad, orthodox or heretical. This is the true origin of bigotry, and that bitterness of spirit with which it is

invariably accompanied. I do not deny, that there are other causes, secular views for instance which co-operate with those prepossessions and prejudices in supporting such a variety of opinions among christians. But I affirm, that it is chiefly imputable to this preposterous method of imbibing opinions implicitly, before we are capable to form a judgment. For when we have no principles of critical knowledge, we have no rule by which to choose, but must be at the mercy of the first interpreter who falls in our way. And of the tenets, which he has dictated, we soon come to think ourselves bound, in honour and conscience, to be the zealous defenders ever after.

But what would you have us to do? Must we give up with all systems, commentaries, paraphrases, and the like? I say not so, entirely, though I by no means think the regular study of them ought to be begun with. When we have made some progress in the scriptural science, we may consult them occasionally, we have then provided ourselves in some principles, by which we may examine them. And let us not confine ourselves to those of one side only, but freely consult those of every side. This we must do, if we would constitute scripture the umpire in the controversy, and not bring it to be tried at the bar of some system maker or commentator. The young student ought habitually to remember, that every man is fallible in judgment, as well as in conduct, and that no man can any more pretend to an exemption from error, than to an immunity from sin. And in this respect, as well as in others, we may well apply the admonition of the psalmist. "Trust not in princes, even chief men," as the word imports in point of erudition as well as

authority, "nor in the sons of men. It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in princes." When a Romanist tells me, "The method you recommend is extremely dangerous; the scriptures are even in the most important articles obscure and ambiguous; you are therefore in the most imminent danger of being misled by them, unless you are first provided in a sound and approved guide;" when, I say, a person of the Romish communion addresseth himself to me in this manner, however much I differ from him in judgment, truth compels me to acknowledge, that he speaks in character and maintains a perfect consistency with the avowed principles of his sect. But when a protestant holds the same language, I must pronounce him the most inconsistent creature upon earth. He deserts all those principles, of the perspicuity and sufficiency of scripture in things essential to salvation, and of the right of private judgment, which served as the great foundation of his dissent from Rome. The confidence, which Rome requires that you should put in the dictates of a church, which she believes, or professes to believe, to be infallible, this man, much more absurdly, requires you to put in those men of whom he owns, that they had no more security against error than you have yourself.

But in reading the scripture, when difficulties occur, what are we to do, or what can we do better, than immediately recur to some eminent interpreter? Perhaps the answer I am going to give, will appear astonishing, as I know it is unusual. If you are not able with the strictest attention and reflection to solve the difficulty yourself, do not make it a rule to seek an immediate

solution of it from some other quarter. Have patience, and as you grow acquainted with the scope of the whole by frequent and attentive reading, you will daily find fewer difficulties; they will vanish of themselves. The more perspicuous parts will insensibly reflect a light on the more obscure. If you had the helps to be obtained from history, geography, the knowledge of the manners and polity of the people, which in effect are perfectly coincident with the study of the language, and which may be all comprehended in these two sources, sacred history and biblical philology, you will be daily fitter, as I said before, for being interpreters for yourselves. And I will take upon me to say, that if this method were universally pursued, and all temporal interests were out of the question, the differences in opinion about the sense of scripture would be inconsiderable. In that case, there would not be one controversy among the disciples of Jesus, where at present there are fifty. And there would be no such thing as classing ourselves under different leaders, which has been so long the disgrace of the christian name. We can read the rebuke which Paul gives to the Corinthians, for distinguishing themselves thus in the true spirit of sectarism, one saying "I am of Paul, another I am of Apollos, a third I am of Cephas," and we remain insensible all the while, that the rebuke strikes much more severely against us, than it did against them. Has not this been universally the method in the christian world for many ages? I am an adherent of the Roman pontiff, says one, and I of the patriarch of Constantinople, says another. And among protestants one says, I am of Luther, another I am of Calvin, a third I am of Arminius. Ay, but were not some of

these, men of the most respectable characters? None is more ready to acknowledge it. But were not Paul and Peter and Apollos, the apostles and first ministers of Christ, also men of the most respectable characters? Yet with what warmth and indignation, do we see one of themselves disclaiming a distinction, which he accounts injurious to the honour of his master, and subversive of his cause. But to proceed. The disciple in each sect is first instructed in the principles or system of their respective leader, and afterwards with the assistance of what they call an orthodox commentator, that is a zealous partisan of the sect, he is sent to the study of scripture. The first object is manifestly to make him of the party, the second to make him a christian, or compounding both views together, to make him, just such a christian, and so far only, as is compatible with the principles of the party. The effect sufficiently demonstrates the absurdity of the method. All of them almost, without exception, of the most opposite sects and most discordant principles, when thus prepared, find without difficulty their several systems supported in scripture, and every other system but their own condemned. How unsafe then must it be to trust in men! When we thus implicitly follow a guide before inquiry, if we should even happen to be in the right, it is, with regard to us, a matter purely accidental. No protestant dares advance the same thing with regard to searching the scriptures, because in doing this we obey the express command of Him, whose authority, in profession at least, all protestants hold to be more venerable, than even that of the founders of their several sects.

But when is it then, that you would think it proper to recur to systems and commentators? The answer is plain. After you have acquired such an insight into the spirit and sentiments of sacred writ, that you are capable of forming some judgment of the conformity or contrariety of the doctrine of these authors to that infallible standard. With the examination of such human compositions, the studies of the theologian ought, in my judgment, to be concluded, and not begun. The disciple of the son of God ought, above all men, to be able with regard to merely human teachers, to apply to himself the words of the poet,

Nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri.

I shall even suppose, that we could put an interpreter into your hands, who would always guide you right, and this is more than any man, that does not claim infallibility, can pretend to do. Yet even in that case, I am not satisfied, that this would be the best method for the young student to take, in order to arrive at the understanding of the scriptures. To learn, seems, with many, to imply no more than a bare exercise of memory. To read, and to remember is, they imagine, all they have to do. I affirm on the contrary that a great deal more is necessary, as to exercise the judgment and the discursive faculty. I shall put the case, that one were employed to teach you algebra; and instead of instructing you in the manner of stating and resolving algebraic equations, he should think it incumbent on him, only to inform you of all the principal problems, that had at any time exercised the art of the most famous algebraists, and the solutions they had given; and being possessed of a retentive memory, I

shall suppose, you have a distinct remembrance both of the questions and the answers; could ye, for this, be said to have learnt algebra? No, surely. To teach you that ingenious and useful art, is to instruct you in those principles, by the proper application of which, you shall be enabled to solve the questions for yourselves. In like manner, to teach you to understand the scriptures, is to initiate you into those general principles, which will gradually enable you of yourselves, to enter into their sense and spirit. It is not to make you repeat by rote the judgments of others, but to bring you to form judgments of your own; to see with your own eyes, and not with other people's. I shall conclude this prelection with the translation of a short passage from the Persian letters, which falls in entirely with my present subject. Rica having been to visit the library of a French convent, writes thus to his friend in Persia concerning what had passed. Father, said I to the librarian, what are these huge volumes which fill the whole side of the library? These, said he, are the Interpreters of the scriptures. There is a prodigious number of them, replied I; the scriptures must have been very dark formerly and very clear at present. Do there remain still any doubts? Are there now any points contested? Are there, answered he with surprise, Are there? There are almost as many as there are lines. You astonish me, said I, what then have all these authors been doing? These authors, returned he, never searched the scriptures, for what ought to be believed, but for what they did believe themselves. They did not consider them as a book, wherein were contained the doctrines which they ought to receive, but as a work which might be made to authorize their

own ideas. For this reason, they have corrupted all the meanings, and have put every passage to the torture, to make it speak their own sense. 'Tis a country whereon people of all sects make invasions, and go for pillage; it is a field of battle, where when hostile nations meet, they engage, attack and skirmish in a thousand different ways.

My next discourse will relate chiefly to the advantages resulting from a proper study of holy writ, the manner of conducting it, particularly with this view, that the student may form to himself a digest of its doctrine.

LECTURE III.

How the Student ought to set about the Examination of the Scriptures..... Directions for forming an Abstract of the Doctrine of Holy Writ.

In my last discourse I purposed to show, that if it was our chief aim, in spiritual matters, to be fed with the sincere milk of the word, to be instructed in the unadulterated doctrine of Christ, we must have recourse to the fountain itself, the sacred scriptures, and begin our studies there. If, on the contrary, like the Pharisees in our Saviour's time, we place unbounded confidence in our several rabbies, the founders of sects and builders of systems; if we are desirous of seeing only with their eyes, that is, in other words, if we are more solicitous to be their followers than the followers of Christ, and think ourselves safer under their guidance, though acknowledged to be merely human and fallible, than under that of the infallible spirit of truth; if this, I say, be our principal purpose, we ought doubtless to pursue the contrary method, and make it our first care to be thoroughly instructed in the traditionary dogmas, glosses, comments of that particular champion under whose banners we choose to enlist ourselves, and by whose name we are carnal and mean enough to glory in being distinguished. And after we have sufficient-

ly imbibed all his sublimated theories and subtile ratiocinations, we may venture safely on the study of scripture; we are in no danger of being disturbed by it. Sufficient care will have been taken to prevent our receiving any light from that quarter, that shall serve to undeceive us, and we are as secure as any Pharisee whatever, that if the word of God should contradict our traditions, the former shall give place to the latter, and be rendered of no effect. I believe there are few, who will in so many words avow this to be their plan. But that it is, in fact, the plan of by far the greater number in every region of the christian world, the effect but too plainly demonstrates. It is wonderful, that the consequences of this method in fixing people unalterably in the opinions good or bad which were first infused into them, and in making them view every thing in that light only which will favour their own prepossessions, have not opened the eyes of mankind as to its impropriety. Can that method be esteemed a good one, which all the world sees, or may see, if they will, is equally adapted to promote truth or error, sense or nonsense; which makes a man to the full as tenacious of positions the most absurd, as of those that are most reasonable, and serves to pervert the only rule, acknowledged by all sides to be unerring, into a mere engine for giving authority to the visions and theories of any dogmatist, who has gotten the first possession of our heads? Is it not in consequence of this, that those of other denominations are astonished to find, that we cannot discover their principles in scripture, and that we are just as much astonished to find, that they cannot there discover ours?

But I am aware of one objection, my doctrine is exposed to, which must at least be owned to be specious. If so many men of distinguished learning and abilities have failed in the attempt of explaining scripture, and forming systems of the christian revelation, how can I (may our young student argue) who, in comparison of these, must acknowledge myself to be both illiterate and weak, hope to succeed in reaching the sense of holy writ, and forming to myself a digest of its doctrine? That many such, as are now mentioned, have failed in the attempt, is manifest from this, the innumerable systems and commentaries extant, which in many things flatly contradict one another, whilst each author supports his own side with great appearance of subtlety and display of erudition. Were this objection to be admitted in all its force, I know not by what kind of logic any person could conclude from it, that it were better to choose without examining, than to examine before we choose. The latter may be right, the former must be wrong. That men of great literary fame have failed, can never be a good reason for trusting implicitly to such.

But I insist upon it, that when examined to the bottom, there will not be found so much in the objection, as is supposed. The usefulness of some branches of learning for the more perfect understanding of scripture is indeed undeniable. Is it because the doctrine of revelation is abstruse and metaphysical, and therefore not to be apprehended by any. who have not been accustomed to the most profound and abstract researches? By no means. The character, which holy writ gives of its own doctrine, is the very reverse of this. It is pure and plain, such as "enlighteneth the

eyes and maketh wise the simple." The institution to be given by the Messiah, is represented by the prophets, as "a highway so patent that the way-faring men though fools should not mistake it," and as an intimation written in so large and legible a character "that he who runs may read." And Paul, in order to signify to us, that there was nothing of difficult investigation in this doctrine, and that the knowledge of it was easily attainable by those who were willing to hear and learn it from the apostles of Christ, says concerning it, "The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise. Say not in thine heart who shall ascend into heaven (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach." And indeed the apostle doth in this, but apply to the new dispensation the same character of plainness and perspicuity, which Moses had formerly affirmed of the old. "This commandment," said he, "which I command thee, this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it." Nor indeed would it be one jot less absurd, to suppose, that in order to attain this divine instruction we should be under the necessity of diving into the depths of human systems, rummaging the re-

cesses of voluminous commentators, or exploring the fine spun speculations of idle theorists, than that we should be obliged to scale the heavens or to cross the seas. It is not therefore on account of any thing abstruse or difficult in the matter itself, that learning is of importance; nor is it for the acquisition of the most essential truths, which are ever the most perspicuous. But its importance to the theologian ariseth from these two considerations; first, that he may be qualified for the defence of religion against the assaults, to which, either in whole or in part, it is exposed from its adversaries; secondly, that he may become more and more a proficient in the sacred style and idiom, and be thereby enabled to enter with greater quickness into all the sentiments of the inspired writers. The languages of holy writ are now dead languages. Learning of one kind is necessary to attain an acquaintance with them, and consequently with those things which they contain, however perspicuously expressed. In the infant state of the church, miraculous gifts, especially the gift of tongues, and that of prophecy, superseded the necessity of human learning altogether. Now that these are withdrawn, we cannot hope to be perfectly acquainted with the mind of the spirit, till by the use of the ordinary means, which God hath put in our power and requires us to employ, we come to understand the language which he speaks. And, as hath been observed already, the history and criticism, which we have recommended, are nothing else, but the natural aids towards such a proficiency in the sacred tongues. This however is a species of knowledge, which it requires no extraordinary genius or talents to enable us to attain. Common sense, time, and appli-

cation will do the business. Eminent talents, if they get a wrong direction, will make us err more widely than we should have done with moderate abilities. In travelling, if we happen to mistake our road, the swifter our motion is, we shall in equal time go so much the farther wrong. But as there is a kind of learning, that is solid and useful to the theologian, there is a kind also, which is visionary and hurtful to him. Of this sort are the abstract philosophy, the ancient dialectic and ontology, which universally for a succession of ages reigned in the schools as the perfection of science, the summit of human wisdom; to whose usurped authority even the christian theology itself hath been most unnaturally subjected, and with whose chains and fetters she still appears more or less encumbered in all the most celebrated systems of our different sects. Disregarding the apostles' warning, men, however they differed in other things, seem to have agreed in this, in "spoiling the doctrine of their master, with philosophy and vain deceit after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." This artificial logic or science of disputation was at bottom no other than a mere playing with hard words, used indeed grammatically and according to certain rules established in the schools, but quite insignificant, and therefore incapable of conveying knowledge. 'Tis in the language of our poet,

Vain wisdom all, and false philosophy,

and in the still more emphatic language of our apostle, "vain janglings and oppositions of science falsely so called, which minister strife and contention, but tend not in the least to godly edifying." Thus much I thought it necessary to observe in order to prevent

our thinking of men above what we ought to think, and particularly to prevent our valuing them for those acquisitions which were in fact an obstruction to their advancement in spiritual knowledge, and not a furtherance.

But it will be asked, and the question is extremely pertinent, In what manner and with what frame of spirit ought we to set about the examination of the scriptures? An attention to this is of so much the greater consequence, that if many have failed in this undertaking, we have the strongest reason to believe, that the failure is more justly chargeable on the heart than on the head, on the want of that disposition, which if it invariably accompany our inquiries, we have the greatest reason to hope they shall be crowned with success. The first thing then, I would here take notice of as an indispensible requisite, is *sincerity*. By this I mean, an habitual and predominant desire in the inquirer to discover in scripture not what may serve to authorize his own ideas, and give a sanction to the cobwebs of his own fancy, or of the fancy of others which he has adopted, but what is the genuine mind and will of God, however unacceptable it may prove to flesh and blood, in order that he may believe and practise it. It is this which our Lord hath termed "a single eye," opposing it to an eye that is vitiated and diseased, concerning which he hath assured us, that "if our eye be single, our whole body shall be full of light." And to the same purpose it is, that he elsewhere affirms that "if any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." If this be the real, the primary purpose of the student's inquiries, he shall have no reason to dread success.

"For the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant." It is in the same way we must interpret the words of the prophet, "None of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand." The term the wise, as opposed to the wicked, it is well known, doth in the scripture idiom always denote, they who sincerely serve and honour God; "for to man he said, Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding."

The second quality requisite in the examiner of sacred writ, is *humility*. This is to be understood as opposed to pride and an overweening conceit of our own discernment and acuteness, than which I know not a more unteachable quality in any pupil. "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit; there is more hope of a fool than of him." As this disposition of humbleness of mind leads to a modest diffidence of oneself, it powerfully inclines on the other hand to recur frequently to the father of lights, by fervent prayer and supplication, for light and guidance in his way. Those possessed of this engaging frame of spirit, are characterized in holy writ under the several epithets of the meek, the humble, and the lowly. As when we are told, that "God will guide the meek in judgment, and the meek he will teach his way." God resisteth "the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." And though the Lord be "high, yet he hath respect to the lowly." And in order to inculcate the necessity of this temper in every genuine disciple, our Lord hath said, "Whosoever will not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall not enter therein." The apostle employs a still bolder figure, where he says,

"If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise."

The third and last quality I shall mention, is *patience*. Nothing can more endanger our forming false conclusions in any study, which we are prosecuting, than impatience and precipitancy in our advances. Our very zeal and ardour itself, which is a commendable quality in every laudable pursuit, is apt to mislead us, unless checked by this virtue as a bridle. In spiritual, as in secular matters, God requires of us the use of those means, which he hath put in our power; and to serve as a motive to our obedience in this, he hath given us the promise of his spirit to assist us. Now all means operate gradually; time therefore is necessary, which requires patient and repeated application. And as to the promises which God hath graciously given for our encouragement, it is our duty in regard to this, as well as in regard to every other promise, to wait patiently on him, in the persuasion, that he will not withhold what instruction is requisite, any more than other good things from them who seek him. It was said by an heathen poet, Φρονειν οἱ ταχεις ȣ̓κ ασφαλεις, Those who are in haste to know, seldom take the surest road. If this may be asserted in general, much more may it in the present case. The young student is so much exposed, both from what he hath occasion to see, and from what he hath occasion to hear, to have the opinions of others obtruded upon him, before he is in a capacity to decide, that it is not easy to resist giving perhaps too hasty an assent, when these opinions shall appear to be plausibly supported. Nay sometimes his good qualities themselves, his candour, his confidence in the judgment of those who are older and wiser than

himself, may betray him into this fault. But he ought to remember, that till he have acquired the first principles of the critical knowledge of the sacred idiom, he is not, in dubious matters, a competent judge either of plausibility or truth. The dogmatism of others, instead of engaging an easier assent, ought to render their opinions the more suspected. This patient cautiousness in judging will be also an excellent guard against his being seduced by an immoderate attachment either to antiquity or to novelty; extremes which are differently affected by different tempers. Some are more ready to adopt an opinion implicitly, because it is ancient, others, because it is new. Both are faulty, though in my judgment the latter is the greater fault of the two. Errors may doubtless be very old, that there are many such we know; but truths in religion natural or revealed cannot be entirely new. And even with regard to the explications that may be given of particular passages of scripture, it is always a shrewd presumption against them, if there is reason to believe that, in the course of so many centuries, they never occurred before. At the same time it must be owned on the other hand, that no prescription can be pleaded for any tenets whatever, in opposition to reason and to common sense. The great aim of scriptural knowledge is to clear the truth from that load of rubbish, with which in the track of ages it hath been in a great measure overwhelmed, through the continued decline of piety and good sense, and through the increase of barbarism, and the gradual introduction of a monstrous species of superstition, a heterogeneous and motley mixture of something of the form of christianity (whose name it dishonoured) with the beggarly elements of

the Jews, and the idolatrous fopperies of the pagans, whence hath resulted a general character of more inveterate malignity, than either judaism or paganism of any form ever manifested. And notwithstanding the inestimable advantages which we derive from the reformation, and the revival of letters in Europe, we have reason still to talk of the state of religion in our day, and the tincture it retains of Romish corruption and the Romish spirit, in much the same way as Horace did of the state of civilization in his,

> In longum tamen ævum
> Manserunt, hodieque manent vestigia *Romæ*.

So much for the most essential characters of upright intention, modest diffidence, and patient perseverance, with which our study of holy writ ought to be accompanied.

The next thing I should consider is, the manner in which we ought to prosecute this study, that we may most effectually attain the end. When I was on the subject of the Jewish history, I observed the propriety of accompanying the reading of this, as we have it in the Old Testament, with the perusal of those uninspired writers of antiquity, whose subject bore any relation to that recorded in the sacred text; and particularly I recommended the careful reading of Josephus the Jewish historian. I observed the propriety of parcelling out the history into periods, and accustoming yourselves to compose abstracts of them severally as you proceed, which will tend at once greatly to increase your knowledge of scripture, to improve your memory, and to produce very useful habits both of reflection and of composition. I must now add, that as one great

view is to habituate you to the scripture idiom, you ought not to satisfy yourselves with reading the Bible in the vulgar translation, but ought regularly to have recourse to the original. Though you should prescribe yourselves but a small portion every day, if you can but persevere in the practice, you will improve very sensibly, and find the task at last grow very easy. The portion of the Old Testament which you first read in Hebrew, I would have you next carefully peruse in Greek in the septuagint translation. Nothing can be of greater consequence for forming the young student to a thorough apprehension of the style of the New Testament. And it may be worth his while to remark the most considerable differences in these two principal exemplars of the Old. When he is puzzled as to the literal or grammatical sense, he may recur to some other translation either into Latin or any modern language which he happens to understand. This, for the beginner, is a much better method, than to recur to commentators. To canvass the reasonings of the latter belongs to maturer age, and is proper only for those, who, to adopt the style of the apostle, have by reason of use, their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. A point of great moment, in my eyes, and which I cannot sufficiently inculcate, is ever to give scope to the student's own reflections, and not (as is the too common method) to preclude all reflection of his own, by perpetually obtruding upon him the reflections of others. He must not conceive study to be purely the furnishing of his memory, but much more the sharpening of his attention, the exercising of his judgment, and the acquiring a habit of considering every subject that comes under his review, carefully and im-

partially on every side. When the young student is possessed of a natural good taste and quickness of discernment, it were a pity, not to put him into that track, which might qualify him in time for being an expositor to himself, and to leave him in the power of the first he happens to meet with, or at least of that commentator who has the knack of setting off his opinions in the most plausible manner.*

But left to himself in this way, will he not be liable often to commit mistakes? 'Tis probable he will, and what then? Can you insure him against them, by the assistance of any author you can assign him? Besides, the mistakes he commits through the exercise of his own judgment when imperfect, he will correct as his judgment improves; whereas the errors he falls into through an implicit faith in the judgment of others, are confirmed by habit, a lazy habit, which effectually prevents that improvement of the judging faculty, which would correct them. Would you never trust a child to his own legs, would you always carry him for fear he should fall? If you shall use him thus, till he arrive at manhood, 'tis a thousand to one he shall never be able to walk in his lifetime. And had it not been better, that he had caught a thousand falls, and been allowed to recover himself again the best way he could, than that he should never acquire the right use of his limbs? And is not the exercise of the mental faculties, as necessary to their improvement, as of the corporeal?

But to return, another method I would recommend to our young student when difficulties occur about the

* See note at the end of this lecture, p. 99.

literal sense of any text, for it is here that his inquiries should begin, let him consult the parallel places in scripture, that is, those passages wherein the same subject is treated, or those at least, wherein there is some allusion or reference to it. Another useful expedient for bringing him acquainted with the idiom of the sacred writers, and for habituating him to read with attention, and to judge with proper circumspection is, as he proceeds in his study, to mark the different senses in which some of the principal words occur in scripture, and the particular circumstances in the context, which serve to determine the sense. For assisting him in acquiring a more perfect knowledge of the Jewish polity and customs, there are several pieces which will be of use, besides those I have had occasion formerly to mention. Such are *Vitringa De Synagoga vetere, Reland de rebus sacris Judeorum, Lewis' Antiquities of the Hebrew Republic, Godwin's Moses and Aaron, Cunæus de republica Hebræorum, Bertram de republica Judaica, Buxtorf's Lexicon talmudicum*, which may be consulted occasionally where it can be had, and for their modern customs, the last mentioned author's *Synagoga Judaica.* As greater proficiency is made, recourse may be had to *Selden* and *Spencer.* Afterwards the scholia on the New Testament of such a writer as Lightfoot may be consulted, who has particularly applied himself to turn his Hebrew and Rabbinical learning to the enlightening of the sacred scriptures, and which he has for that reason named Horæ Hebraicæ et Talmudicæ. I do not name so many authors, as thinking it of importance that you should see and read them all, but because it may fall in the way of some of you to light on one of them, and others on another, that you might

take the opportunity when you can. For if you should not happen to meet with any of these for some time, I am far from thinking that great progress may not be made by your own application only, with the assistance of the original languages, and the translation of the Septuagint above mentioned. I would never have any young man, who has a tolerable capacity, and is willing to use it, to be discouraged for want of books.

I put you upon a method formerly of making an abstract of the sacred history, as you advance in your reading; I come now to suggest what may be of use for forming to yourselves an abstract of the doctrine of holy writ. This task indeed requires much greater proficiency than the former, and therefore ought by no means to be so early undertaken. The former may be executed gradually as you proceed in reading; by composing a narrative of the principal events in each period immediately after you have read the history of it in the Bible, and before you begin to peruse the account of the succeeding. But as to a summary of doctrine, one ought to be pretty well versed in the whole scriptures both of Old and New Testaments, before he attempt it. When the student sets about a design of this kind, he may pursue some such method as the following. As God is the great object of religious worship and service, it is proper to begin with inquiring, what is the doctrine of sacred writ concerning *the divine nature and perfections.* Let him take the assistance of a concordance when his memory fails, and carefully collate all the clearest and most explicit passages on every several topic, extracting from the whole a brief summary of what relates both to the natural and moral attributes of the Deity, as they are

commonly, though not so properly, distinguished, such as the spirituality, unity, eternity, immutability, and sovereignty of God, his omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, his wisdom, justice, truth, and goodness. In expressing what relates to each of these, let him adhere as close as possible to the style of scripture, only avoiding metaphorical and figurative expressions, and rendering these, where he meets with them, by the plainest and simplest terms which can convey the sense. Let him next proceed to the doctrine of holy writ, concerning *the creation of the world* and *the divine providence*. Let him still in the same manner, and with the scriptures alone for his rule and guide, consider in the third place, *human nature*, particularly noting what is delivered concerning these three articles, the state of man immediately after the creation, the fall, and its consequences. The fourth point will be the doctrine concerning *the Messiah* or son of God, all which may be comprised under these articles, his pre-existence and divinity, his state of suffering including his incarnation, his character, his ministry on earth, his death and burial, and thirdly, his succeeding state of glory, including his resurrection, ascension, exaltation, and second coming, together with the purposes which the several particulars were intended to answer. The fifth point will be the doctrine concerning *the Holy Spirit*, which may be all comprised in two articles, what he is, and what he does. The sixth point, which in the order of nature should immediately follow the mediation of the son and ministration of the spirit, is that great end to which both are directed, *the regeneration* or recovery of man. On this head may be considered, the external means, their use, their difference under different

dispensations, and their connection with the effect produced. The seventh point will be the doctrine concerning *the world to come.* This may be subdivided into five articles, the intermediate state between death and the resurrection, the general resurrection, the future judgment, heaven and hell. The eighth and last point, the doctrine which scripture gives concerning itself, comprehending two articles, first *what is scripture*, secondly, *what is its authority.* The eight general heads (which for memory's sake I shall repeat) are the following, *God, the creation, man, the son of God, the Holy Spirit, the regeneration, the world to come, the scriptures.*

In framing the compendious digest above proposed, there are some things, which I would have the student particularly careful of. The first is, not to have recourse to any human, that is to say any foreign aid whatever, but to confine himself entirely to the revealed word. He must have it deeply rooted in his mind, that the question, he is concerned in resolving, is not what is the doctrine of this or the other learned man, of this or the other sect or party, but what, to the best of his judgment, is the doctrine of the sacred volume. What have I to do, should he say, to take this doctrine upon trust and at second hand, when I have access to the fountain itself? If this book was given of God as a rule to all men, it must be in things essential, level to the capacity of all. Shall I take the mind of the Creator on the report of the creature, when, if I will, I have the opportunity of hearing the voice of the Creator himself?

The second thing is, not to indulge a disposition to speculate on points, which cannot with any propri-

ety be said to be revealed. Sometimes events are mentioned, and a profound silence is observed as to the cause. Sometimes we are told of operations, but not a word of the manner of conducting them. Our information goes just so far and no farther. It is of the nature of our present state, and coincides with the design of our author, that here we should know in part only, that here we should see darkly as through a glass. Let us not vainly seek to be wise in divine things, above what is written. Let us ever stop where revelation stops; and not pretend to move one single inch beyond it. It is chiefly by indulging the contrary practice, and giving way to the airy excursions of an inventive imagination, that all our system-builders, without exception, have more or less wandered from the mark. The question which I have to resolve (the student ought thus to argue with himself) is not what doctrine I should think reasonable or probable, but what is the doctrine contained in this book? However different therefore in other respects, it is as much a question of fact, what is the doctrine of the Bible, as it would be, if I were to be interrogated concerning the doctrine of Mahomet's Alcoran or Zoroaster's Zend. Nor can I ever think myself more at liberty, by philosophizing after my manner, to adulterate with my reveries the doctrine of Jesus Christ, than I should think myself at liberty to treat thus the system either of the military prophet of the Mussulmans, or of the Persian sage. It is the contrary practice, which hath so miserably sophisticated the christian scheme, and rendered many of our theological controversies mere logomachies, or no other than doting about questions and strifes of words, in which,

if the terms were properly defined and understood, the difference would vanish. There are not a few of them in like manner, and those too the most hotly agitated, of which it may be said with the greatest justice, that scripture is of neither side, having never so much as entered into the question. The third thing I would have him attend to, is to keep as near as possible to scripture style, only preferring proper to figurative expressions, and using those words which are the plainest, and of the most definite signification. Above all, he ought to avoid the use of technical terms and phrases, which, it may be alleged, gives a learned dress to religion; but it is a dress that very ill befits an institution intended for the comfort and direction of all even of the lowest ranks. It is besides but too manifest, that this garb is often no other, than a cloak for ignorance. And of all kinds of ignorance, learned ignorance is undoubtedly the most contemptible.

I shall consider next the manner in which the student may attempt a compend of the christian ethics; and consider the advantages, that will result to him, in being pretty much employed in such exercises.

NOTE REFERRED TO IN PAGE 93.

As a specimen of the manner of study above recommended, and as an instance of its advantages, it may not be improper to subjoin a criticism of Dr. Campbell's on a passage in the epistle to the Hebrews. The investigation is exhibited so clearly and fully, that it will shew by the teacher's own example and success, the benefit which the student may reasonably expect from an observance of his rules. *Juvat usque morari et conferre gradum.* The passage is Heb. iii. 5. *Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant.* When I consider the scope of the apostle

in this chapter, I perceive clearly an intention to compare the two great legislators whom God had sent into the world, first, Moses, then Jesus Christ, not in respect of the personal virtues which they exhibited, but in respect of the dignity of station or rank to which they were raised. In respect of virtue, there is no contrast at all in the passage; as indeed in what regards a trust, nothing greater can be said of any one than is said of Moses, that he was faithful. And so far is that which follows, to wit, that Moses was only a servant, Jesus Christ the son and heir, from giving the superiority in point of merit to the latter; that, as is universally allowed, the less a man has of personal interest, in the subject entrusted him, the greater is the virtue of his fidelity. But the whole scope of the apostle sufficiently shows, that in nothing are the two great lawgivers above mentioned meant to be compared, but in title, office, and rank. As no doubt can be made of the entire faithfulness of both, it appears like a deviation from the scope of the argument, to mention this virtue at all. But can any thing be clearer or more unexceptionable than the common version, *Moses was faithful*, Μωσης μεν πιστος? Notwithstanding its clearness, notwithstanding its commonness, I may almost say, its universality, I cannot help entertaining some doubts concerning it. The apostle has, in treating this topic, a manifest allusion to a passage in the Pentateuch, in which, on occasion of the sedition of Aaron and Miriam, God says, Numb. xii. 6, &c. *If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house.* This passage plainly gives room for the same suspicion. The scope of the place is manifestly to show the superior privileges of Moses, through the favour of God, to those of any other prophet, and not his superior virtues. The words that follow make this, if possible, still more glaring. v. 8. *With him will I speak, mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold. Wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?* Nothing can be plainer, than that the intention is here to shew not the virtue, but the prerogative of Moses, above all other prophets under that dispensation, as it is the intention of the writer to the Hebrews to shew the prerogative of Jesus

Christ above Moses. And for this reason, I suspect that the word is not rightly rendered, *faithful*, in the passage quoted from Numbers.

That I may discover, if possible, whether my suspicion is well founded, I shall first recur to the place in the version of the Seventy, where the expression, about which the doubt arises, is the same as in the epistle to the Hebrews; ὁ θεραπων μου Μωυσης εν ὁλω τω οικω μου πιστος εστιν. Yet, there is here no comparative view of virtues, but only of honours and privileges; nothing is said tending to derogate from the faithfulness of any other prophet. Nor does εν ὁλω τω οικω μου make the smallest addition in this respect; for, as our Lord hath said, "He who is faithful in little will be faithful also in much; and he who is unfaithful in little, will be unfaithful also in much." Yet, if in our interpretations, we are to be determined solely by the classical use, it is hardly possible to conceive, how πιστος can be rendered otherwise into English than by the term *faithful*.

I therefore find it necessary, in the last place, to recur to the Hebrew. There I find the word rendered, πιστος, is *neeman*, which has not only the signification of *faithful*, but being the passive participle of the verb, *aman*, to believe, signifies also *trusted*, *charged with*, and thence also, *firm*, *stable*, &c. Now as the sense of Greek words in Hellenistic use is often affected by the Hebrew, the word, πιστος, has this meaning in several passages of the Septuagint. See for an example of this 1 Sam. iii. 20, where the words, ὁτι πιστος Σαμουηλ εις προφητην τω κυριω, are rendered in the English translation, *that Samuel was established, to be a prophet of the Lord*. The translators have made a reference to the margin on the word *established*, adding there, or, *faithful*. The same term both in Hebrew and Greek is rendered Psal. lxxxix. 28, by the English word *fast*. *My covenant shall stand fast with him*. The expression in Numbers, to which the Apostle to the Hebrews refers, is thus rightly rendered by Castalio. *At cum Mose meo, non item, cui totius meæ domus fides habetur*. And by Houbigant, *Non ita servus meus Moyses. Ille universæ domus meæ minister est perpetuus*. In his notes he adds, *neeman, stabilis*, non autem, *fidelis*. "Enimvero hic describitur Moyses ex perpetuitate prophetiæ, non ex morum fidelitate. Ita rem intelligebat Paulus Apost. ubi postquam testimonio hujus loci usus

est, addit continenter, *amplioris enim gloriæ iste præ Moyse dignus habitus est;* gloriam gloriæ comparans; Christi Domini cum Moysis. Et claudicaret similitudo, si gloriam Christi cum Mosis fidelitate compararet."

In order to give a more distinct view of the light, which the above mentioned alteration throws upon the passage. I shall offer an exact version of the whole paragraph, being the first six verses of the third chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. To take such a view of the whole in connexion, is often necessary, as much for the better explaining of the import of a criticism, as for evincing its solidity. " *Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the apostle and high priest of our religion, Jesus Christ, who, as well as Moses, was by him who raised him to that dignity, intrusted with all his house But who hath attained honour as far superior to that of Moses, as the glory of the builder is greater than that of the house. For every house hath been built by some person; but he who built all things is God. And Moses was indeed trusted as a servant, for publishing to all God's family whatever he had in charge: but Christ is trusted as a son over his own family; whose family we are, provided we maintain our profession and boasted hope, unshaken to the end.*" Nothing can be more evident than that it is the sole intention of this writer to compare the dignities of station, not the virtues, of Moses and Christ, the two founders of the only divine dispensations of religion, the Jewish and the Christian. He admits that Moses as well as Christ, may be justly said to have been entrusted, not with a part only, but with all God's house ; and that, in this respect, Moses had a very great pre-eminence above all the other prophets of that dispensation ; but in regard to Christ, though it might be said his charge was the same in point of extent, the whole house of God, the trust committed to him was in its nature greatly superior. Moses was trusted with the whole, but it was only ὡς θεραπων, like a steward, who is no more than an upper servant in the family, but Jesus Christ as a son, who is the heir of all.

It may not be amiss here to take notice of the circumstances which first suggested to me the criticism now made, or rather, as I may justly say, which first occasioned my lighting upon the sense of this passage. By carefully retracing the steps in conse-

quence whereof we have arrived at any discovery, we take the most probable means of suggesting to others a method by which future discoveries may be made. The faithfulness of Moses, as mentioned both here and in the Pentateuch, had often appeared to me foreign from the scope of the context, which related in both places solely, to the excellency of the office, not to the worthiness of the officer. At the same time I did not see how πιστος could be translated otherwise than *faithful*. I found it so rendered in all the versions of the New Testament I had consulted, Castalio's not excepted. But then I had recourse to Castalio's version of the Old Testament, for the interpretation of the passage alluded to, I found the rendering totally different, and such as perfectly suited the scope of the argument. It implied solely, that to Moses had been committed the charge of all God's house; a charge so weighty, as had never been committed to any prophet before him, nor indeed to any prophet after him under that dispensation. This led me to look into the Septuagint, where I found the term πιστος employed, as it was afterwards by the apostle, who (as usual) copied the words of that version. My next recourse was to the Hebrew, where I found the origin of the error lay in the ambiguity of a Hebrew participle, which even analogically should signify *cui fides habetur*, rather than *qui fidelis est*. Castalio, though sensible of this in translating the Hebrew word *neeman*, did not think he could render in the same manner the Greek πιστος. Yet it is one of the chief peculiarities of the idiom of the synagogue, that the Greek words have in it an extent of signification corresponding to that of the Hebrew words which they are employed to represent. I was not at that time acquainted with the translation of the Old Testament by Houbigant, who has signified in a note on the passage in the Pentateuch, that the words of the apostle ought to be understood and interpreted in the same manner. This, together with many other examples which might be brought, serves to confirm an observation I have made in another place, that to understand perfectly the language of the New Testament, the knowledge of Hebrew is almost as necessary as that of Greek.

LECTURE IV.

Directions for forming a System of Christian Morality. Advantages of the Method recommended.

In my last lecture, I made it my business to point out a proper method for conducting the study of holy writ, in such a manner, as that from it the student may form to himself, uninfluenced by the opinions of fallible men, a digest of the truth, as it is in Jesus. I purpose in the present discourse, to shew how he may proceed to form a system of christian morality. This, though properly first in intention, (for we seek knowledge to direct our practice) is last in execution; it being that, to which every other part in this economy points, as to its ultimate end. The great and primary aim of the whole is to renew us again after the image of him that created us, in righteousness and true holiness; faith itself, and hope, however important, act in a subserviency to this. It may indeed be thought, that as there are much fewer disputes concerning the duties required by our religion, than concerning the doctrines which it teaches, the examination of the former, as the easier task, ought to precede the examination of the latter. And indeed this remark would have so far weighed with me, that if I had judged it expedient to begin our inquiries into the christian theology by the study of systematic and contro-

versial writers, I should have adopted this method, on account of its greater simplicity and easiness. But if, waving for a time all attentions to the comments, glosses, traditions, questions, and refinements of men, recourse is had only to the divine oracles, there is not the same necessity; the difference in point of difficulty, if any, will be found inconsiderable; on the other hand, the progression from knowledge to faith, from faith to love, from love to obedience, is more conformable to the natural influence of things upon the human mind. Besides, the subject of christian morals is not without its difficulties nor its controversies, though they have been neither so great nor so many, as those which have been raised in relation to several points supposed to belong to the christian doctrine. But even this subject is not in all respects uncontroverted; witness the many differences in point of practice that not only subsist, but are warmly contested by the different sects in Christendom, one party thinking he doth God good service, by an action which another looks on with abhorrence, and justly stigmatizes as at once impious and inhuman. With how many still, are matters of full as little account, as tithing mint, anise and cummin, exalted above the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy and fidelity? It is sacrificed with some, which with others is accounted sacrilege; and in too many places of what is called the christian world, those absurd austerities and self-inflicted cruelties, which degrade human nature, dishonour religion, and could only become the worshippers of dæmons, such as Baal or Moloch, are extolled as the sublimity of christian perfection. I mention these things only by the way, in order to shew that the una-

nimity among christians, in regard to moral duties, is not so complete, as is commonly imagined. Not that I would have the student at first to enter into these questions in relation to morality, any more than into such as are of a speculative nature and relate to doctrine. Let it be his first aim in both provinces, to inquire impartially into the mind of the spirit, as it appears in revelation itself, without admitting any interruption from the visions and speculations of men. Something of a plan or outline has been suggested to assist him in his inquiries into the doctrine of scripture; it will not be improper to proceed in the same way in what regards the system of duty which may be collected from the same volume. Only it will be proper to premise, that though the law of the gospel be not as was the law of Moses, what the apostle styles a law of commandments or a law of ordinances, yet there are some things (as is absolutely necessary in every religious institution calculated for a creature such as man) *of a ceremonial*, and some of a *mixed nature* partly ceremonial and partly moral, as well as some things *purely moral*. Of the first kind are what we now call the christian sacraments, baptism and the Lord's supper; of the second what regards social and public worship and the separation of particular times for the purpose; and of the third, all the duties directly comprehended under *charity* or the love of God and man. As to the doctrine of the New Testament in regard to the two first, I meant to comprehend them under the sixth head of the sketch I gave in relation to the christian doctrine, which I termed the regeneration or the recovery of man. Under this was comprised the consideration of the external means, their

use, their difference under different dispensations, and their connection with the effect to be produced. The subject to which I here confine myself is christian morality, or the pure ethics of the gospel. Every thing that is of a positive nature falls much more properly under the former part. In regard to this, it is evident, that different methods may be adopted for classing the different branches of duty, and there may be a conveniency in viewing the same subject in a variety of lights.

The only method which I shall take notice of at present, and which is both the simplest and the most obvious, is that which results from the consideration of the object, *God*, *our neighbour*, and *ourselves*. This division the apostle Paul has given of our duty in a passage well deserving the christian's most serious attention, as intimating the great and ultimate end of the gospel dispensation: "The grace of God," says he, "that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." The whole of christian morality is here divided into three great branches; *sobriety*, or the duty which every man owes to himself, and which consists in what we may call *self government* in the largest acceptation of the word, implying two great articles, a due command, first of appetite, secondly of passion; which we may distinguish by the titles of temperance and modera-

tion, the former as it stands opposed to these vices, intemperance, incontinence, and sloth, which are different branches of voluptuousness; the latter as it stands opposed to pride, anger, avarice, and the love of life, being distinguished by these several names, humility, meekness, contentment and fortitude.

Again, the second general branch into which the christian morality is divided, is *righteousness*, or that duty which every man owes to all mankind. This may be subdivided from a regard to what is implied in the nature of the subject, into these two virtues, justice and beneficence. The former, that is justice, however highly valued and rarely found, is but at best a kind of negative virtue, and consists in doing no ill to others, in not injuring them in their persons, property, virtue, or reputation, which is but the lowest effect of that love, which every man owes to another. "For this," says the apostle, "thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour." It proves an effectual check to injury in thought, word and action. But I call it the lowest attainment of that divine principle, not to injure those, to whom it obligeth us to do all the good we can. This constitutes the nature of that beneficence, which was mentioned as the second branch of that duty, which we owe to other men. Justice or equity is sufficient to prevent our doing that to another, which on a change of circumstances we could not approve, or think just and equitable if done to ourselves; but be-

neficence goes further and applies the golden precept of our Lord in its full extent, "Whatsoever ye would, that men should do unto you, do ye also so unto them." This leads to all the different exertions of love, which the different situations of the object, or the different relations, which the object bears to us, require at our hands, and which are distinguished by the names of generosity, benevolence, patriotism, hospitality, friendship, natural affection, brotherly love, humanity, gratitude, clemency, mercy and forgiveness.

The third branch in the general division is *godliness* or *piety;* which has the great author of our being for its immediate object. The duties which we owe to him, and which constitute that spiritual worship which the devout soul habitually at all times and in all places pays him, are reverence, love, trust and resignation. The object of the first, which is reverence, is the supereminent excellency of all the divine attributes, considered in themselves: that of the second, which is love, is his goodness and mercy, particularly as they appear in his works of creation and redemption; the object of the third, which is trust, is in a special manner the veracity and faithfulness of God, considered in conjunction with his wisdom and power; and the object of the fourth and last, which is resignation, is providence, that is to say, all the divine perfections considered as employed in the government of the world, and in overruling all events in such a manner, as that they shall fulfil the ends of infinite wisdom and goodness, and complete at last the happiness of God's people. This view of the christian plan of morals is the more agreeable, that it exhibits to us our duty in a kind of scale or climax, not unlike the ladder which

Jacob saw in his dream, whose foot was fixed upon the earth, and whose top reached the heaven. It begins at self, at the regulation of the inferior appetites and passions, the great hindrances to spiritual illumination, and to all moral improvement, and at the acquisition of those virtues which are in effect little other in themselves than the negation of vices; and from these, it rises and expands itself so as to embrace the human race, thence again it ascends even to the throne of the most high God.

The end of the christian religion is often represented as being the assimilation of the soul to God, by which alone we can be qualified for the enjoyment of him. Now as virtue in man, so the moral perfections of God have been represented as concentering in the single character of love. "Love is of God," says the apostle John, "and God is love." Agreeably to this doctrine, the acquisition of this quality is represented as the end of the whole christian dispensation, which our apostle styles "the commandment" by way of eminence. "Now the end of the commandment is charity," (or love, for the word in the original is the same) "out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." To the same purpose we are told that it is "the bond of perfectness," or that which must consummate the christian character. You need not be told, that in the love of God and the love of our neighbour our duty to both is in the New Testament commonly comprehended, and these two constitute the second and third classes of duty in the gospel system above enumerated.

With regard to the virtues of the first class, which have self for the object, and which consist in tempe-

rance with regard to bodily appetite, and moderation in what concerns the passions of the soul, these cannot be considered as bearing in themselves a direct resemblance to any thing in the divine mind. They result purely from the peculiarities of our nature and circumstances; at the same time, they are absolutely prerequisite to the acquisition of that resemblance. They prepare the heart for its reception, by the exclusion of whatever might tend to obstruct its access. Nor can any thing more effectually block up the avenues of the heart to prevent the entrance of the celestial guest, christian love, than sensuality and inordinate affection. Thus I have given you a kind of skeleton of the ethics of the gospel, not to preclude your own assiduous endeavours on this most important topic, but to serve on the contrary as hints to promote them. In forming a digest upon such a plan, it would be proper to observe carefully the same things, which were pointed out as meriting your attention on the former head. They were principally three, to make scripture serve as its own interpreter; not to indulge a spirit of philosophizing, or disposition to refine upon the several articles; and lastly, to adopt as nearly as possible the scripture language, only preferring the plainest and simplest expressions to those which are figurative, or may be thought in any respect ambiguous or obscure.

It will not be improper in such a system, to attend a little to what may be called the order of subordination in duties, and to point out in cases wherein there may be an interfering, which ought to give place to the other. I do not mean, that he should enter into all the curious discussions of casuistry, an art, which

when all things are duly considered, will be found, I fear, to have done more disservice to religion and morals than benefit. In matters of right and wrong, it has been observed with reason, that our first thoughts are commonly the best. God hath not left the discovery of practical truths, or what regards our duty, in the same way, as those truths that are of a theoretic nature, to the slow and precarious deductions of the rational faculty; but has in our consciences given such clear intimations of what is right and amiable in conduct, that where there have been no prejudices to occupy the mind, and pervert the natural sense of things, it commands an immediate and instinctive approbation. Recourse is rarely had to the casuist for the sake of discovering what is our duty, but very often that we may find a plausible pretext for eluding its commands. The christian scheme in this particular will be found, it is hoped, exactly conformable to the purest dictates of the unprejudiced mind, to be truly perfective of our nature, which it evidently tends to purify, expand and raise, from every thing that is sordid, contracted or low. The casuistic art, as it is commonly managed, is in fact but a child of the metaphysical theology of the schools, and has taken a considerable tincture from the secular considerations which have influenced the parent. Hence the term casuistical reasoning has, with judicious people, fallen very much into disgrace, and is considered at present as very nearly synonimous with sophistical and jesuitical reasoning. I do not say indeed, that there may not sometimes happen complicated cases, in which even a sensible and good man might be perplexed on which side he ought to determine. But these do not frequently occur; and to

employ oneself in imagining them before hand, and in devising the various possible circumstances in which transgression may be either extenuated or excused, will, I am afraid, be found a more effectual expedient for insinuating vice, than it is for making us understand the just limits of virtue.

I come now to point out the advantages, which will redound to the student from his employing so much of his time and labour on the scriptures, as the exercises, which I have enjoined, will necessarily require. The first and most manifest advantage is a knowledge of the scriptures. If any thing whatever can contribute to this end, the method I have proposed must certainly do it. Every thing that is remarkable in the sacred volume may almost be comprised in these three particulars, the history it contains, the scheme of doctrine, and the system of precepts. In order to make a proper abstract of each, it is necessary that we should be attentive to, and get acquainted with every part. Some parts indeed are more essential for one of these purposes, and other parts for another; but there is no portion of sacred writ, of which we may not say with justice, that it is conducive for our improvement, either in the biblical history, doctrine, or morals, if not in more than one of them, or even in all the three.

Another advantage well deserving the student's serious attention is this. It puts him upon a method, by means of which he can hardly be in a situation wherein he may not have it in his power to employ his time profitably in the acquisition of useful knowledge, and in forming habits of composition. I can easily conceive, and I believe many of you, gentlemen, may have experienced what I am going to mention, I say, I can

easily conceive that the situation, in which you may sometimes find yourselves, may be such as affords very little advantage for study, on any plan of reading that could well be proposed. The books which I might recommend may not be found in the places to which your circumstances may lead you, and even the most ordinary helps may not be at hand. On the plan I propose, a great deal may be done with no other book but the Bible, and a Concordance, which are to be found every where. Such of you as can read Hebrew, and it is what you all ought to read, should never be without a Hebrew Bible of your own, and let me add to this, a copy of the Septuagint and the Greek New Testament. And if ye have these, which are neither cumbersome, nor expensive, ye are so richly provided, that it is your own fault, wherever ye are, if ye are not improving daily. The other books, which I have recommended for your advancement in the knowledge of sacred history, and for familiarizing you to the Jewish manners, ceremonies, polity, idiom, ye ought to use when ye have the opportunity of such assistances, but ought always to remember that the want of them needs never impede your progress, and consequently is no excuse for your being idle. It is a point of the utmost consequence to young men, that we lay down to them a proper method of employing their time, not in a certain imaginary situation which one might devise or wish, but in those actual situations, in which the greater part of you have a probability of being. I have known directions given to students, which seemed to proceed on the hypothesis, that they were to live all their days in the midst of a library, where no literary production of any name was

wanting. The consequence of this was, that the impracticability of the execution made all the sage directions they received, to be almost as soon forgotten as given; and even if they were not forgotten, as they could not be put in practice, for want of the necessary implements recommended, they would serve only as an excuse for idleness. I would, as much as possible, supply this defect; and allow me to add, I would deprive every one of you, if I can, of that silly pretext for doing nothing, that you have not books. I insist upon it, that the young student, while he has the Bible, may still be usefully employed.

A third advantage which will redound from a proper application of the method now proposed, is that your style on religious subjects will be very much formed on that of the scriptures. And what can be so proper for conveying the mind of God in the great truths of revelation, as that which was employed by the spirit of God, who speaks to us by the sacred penmen? One of the many unhappy consequences, which have resulted from the divisions of christians, from their classing themselves under their several captains and leaders, in manifest derogation from the honour due to their only head and lord, the Messiah, and in no less manifest contempt of the apostolical warnings they have received to the contrary, (one, I say, of the unhappy consequences of this conduct) is, that each party hath got a dialect of its own, formed upon the model of the great doctor or rabbi the founder, or, at least, the champion of the sect to whom they have implicitly resigned their understandings. And what is worse, this diversity in the dialects used by the different parties hath itself become the ground of an alienation of heart from one

another; and that, even in cases where this difference in phraseology, is all the difference which a wise man would be able to discern between them. It was the resolution of Paul to speak the things of God, "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." The reverse is the practice of all, in whom the true spirit of the sect predominates, of whatever denomination the sect be. They are ever for speaking the things of God, not in the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth, but which man's wisdom teacheth. In antediluvian times when the sons of God went in to the daughters of men, the product of this unnatural mixture, as the sacred historian informs us, was giants, men of renown indeed, but renowned only for what is bad, men hideous both in body and mind, as eminent for their wickedness as for their stature. When religion, the daughter of heaven, hath been at any time unhappily forced to admit an intercourse with school metaphysics, a mere son of earth, the fruit of such incongruous union has been a brood no less monstrous. Or to adopt an apt similitude of Luther's, "*Mixtione quadam ex divinis eloquiis et philosophicis rationibus, tanquam ex Centaurorum genere biformis disciplina conflata est.*" Hence those absurdities in doctrine, dressed in technical and barbarous language, by which the truth, as it is in Jesus, hath been so miserably defaced. Nor have these last monsters been guilty of fewer or less considerable ravages, than the first. In proof of this fact, many of the most incontestible evidences from church history might be produced. What the apostle dreaded with regard to the Corinthians, has in less or more befallen christians of all denominations, their minds have been cor-

rupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. A more curious, a more artificial and a more learned style was necessary to gratify a vitiated palate and depraved appetite.

Many are the evils, which to this day are consequent upon an immoderate attachment to scholastic language. One is, a certain jealousy of temper which it has occasioned. As one principal distinction, especially in those parties or factions which are considered as approaching nearest to one another, is in their style and idiom, a true sectary gives a particular attention, not to the sentiments, but to the phraseology of any writer or speaker whose performance falls under his consideration, in order that he may discover whether he be a genuine son of the party. For this purpose, he is apt to scrutinize every word and expression, though in itself the most harmless and inoffensive, with a kind of malicious severity, and, in consequence of this habit, acquires a suspicious censoriousness in his manner of judging, which in every doubtful case, leans to the unfavourable side; a disposition the most opposite, both to the docile and to the charitable temper of christianity, that can be well conceived. Do not mistake me, as though I meant this charge against any one sect or party, or those of one particular persuasion. I am persuaded, on the contrary, that it may with too great justice be charged on all. Nay what is worse, though they are shy to speak it out, the style of scripture itself doth not altogether escape their animadversion and dislike. In the various disputes that have been introduced, as those on each side pretend, that the doctrine of holy writ is conformable to that of their party, each has recourse to it for arguments. Each picks out those

expressions and passages which appear most favourable to its own dogmas, carefully avoiding those, which seem to lean to the side of the adversary and are most commonly quoted by him. The consequence of this is, that the various texts of scripture are strangely disunited among themselves, ranged on different sides, and, as it were, mustered among the forces of the opposite combatants. One set of scriptural expressions and terms become the favourites of one party, and are, to say the least of it, carefully avoided by another; this latter has also in holy writ its darling terms and phrases, which are no less shunned and disliked by the former. Thus all have more or less incurred the reproach which the prophet Malachi threw out against the priests of his day, "that they had corrupted the covenant, and were partial in the law." Part, it would seem, pleased them, and part did not; they were careful to cull out those particulars which were suited to their taste, and not less careful to omit such as were unpalatable. And are not we chargeable with the like partiality in regard to God's word? Doth not one side look with a jealous eye on the very mention of good works, especially as that according to which we must finally be judged, according to which we must be either rewarded or punished? Doth not the necessity of obedience, though delivered in the very words of scripture, the insufficiency of faith when unfruitful and alone, the danger of apostacy, of making shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience, and the duty of perseverance, alarm them with the direful apprehensions of arminianism, pelagianism, popery, the doctrine of merit, and what not? But do I accuse those of one side only? By no means. Under this sin all sects and

parties may with the greatest justice be concluded. Do but consider the matter impartially. How are those of a different party affected by the mention of our being saved by faith, of the necessity of divine grace, of election, regeneration, and the like? Are not their fears as quickly alarmed? Are they not apt to exclaim, "rank calvinism," it is much if they do not add, "fanatical and puritanical nonsense?" And is it not evident, that in this manner, the censures and reproaches of both are levelled in a great measure against the word of God itself, whose language, it is manifest, that neither party will admit in all things to be safe and unexceptionable? It is worth while to observe the different ways of quoting adopted by different sides. Each always abounds most in the favourite texts of the party; but when the introduction of a passage, that has been often strenuously urged by an adversary, seems unavoidable, what pains do they not take to mend it? With what circumspect attention do they intersperse such clauses, and make such additions, as may prevent its being understood in any other sense, than the sect approves? Is it possible in a more glaring manner, to show their disapprobation of the language of the spirit; and that it is their opinion, that on some points even the Holy Ghost hath expressed himself incautiously, an oversight, which, it would seem, they think it incumbent on them, when occasion offers, to correct? I know no way to avoid all those evil consequences of the spirit of schism and rage of dogmatism, that have so long and so universally prevailed in the church, but by having recourse directly to the fountain, before our minds have been tainted by any party whatever. This, and nothing but this, will ever

bring our judgments into the right train, and lead us to determine concerning the doubtful and jarring opinions and expressions of men by the infallible word of God, and not of the infallible word of God, by the doubtful and jarring opinions and expressions of men.

The last great advantage I propose to mention as resulting from this method, is the preparation it gives for the understanding, both of the general controversy concerning the truth of christianity, and in like manner of all the particular disputes that have arisen in the church. This I shall illustrate in the next lecture.

LECTURE V.

Subject continued....The knowledge of the Scriptures the most essential part of the Study....How far the Study of Controversy demands our attention.

In my last discourse, I began with giving some hints to aid the young inquirer into religion, in forming a kind of system of christian morality, and concluded with pointing out the advantages which would redound to him, from his being frequently employed in the exercises on the scripture which we have recommended, that is, in making abstracts, first of the scriptural history, secondly of the doctrines, and thirdly of the moral precepts. Of these advantages, I particularly mentioned and illustrated on the last occasion, three. The first was, that it is one of the most effectual methods, I can conceive, of bringing the student to an intimate acquaintance with his Bible. The second was, that it suggests to him an excellent method of employing his time usefully in almost any situation wherein he can be placed. Every other method or plan of study presupposeth so many things, so much leisure, so many conveniences, and so great a variety of books, that admitting it were ever so profitable, it can scarcely ever be put in execution; whereas on the contrary, if the young divine, however situated, be not in a condition for executing this, we may say justly, that in ninety nine cases out of a hundred, he has himself to blame.

The third advantage I mentioned was, that his style in religious matters, in what regards the great truths of revelation, would by this method be formed entirely on the style of holy writ, the great and only source of our information on this head, a style which in general terms is admitted by all parties of christians to be unexceptionable, a style which no sect dares directly to accuse, and yet with which no true sectary is altogether satisfied. Nor will this advantage appear inconsiderable to those, who see what it is to be confined and hampered in the trammels of a faction, and who are duly sensible of the jealousy and malignity of spirit, that have been consequent on the many discordant Babel dialects, which have been introduced into the christian world by our numerous and antichristian divisions.

The fourth and last great advantage, which in concluding I just mentioned, and now intend to illustrate, is, the preparation which by this method the student will acquire, for the understanding both of the general controversy concerning the truth of christianity, and also of the particular disputes that have arisen in the church. As to the general controversy concerning the truth of revelation, the objections of the adversaries, as was observed formerly, are mostly of two kinds. They are either intrinsic, and are levelled against the contents of scripture, the doctrine it teaches, the morals it inculcates, or the probability of the history it records; or extrinsic, and are levelled against the outward evidences which are produced in its defence, the miracles performed, and the prophecies fulfilled. Now as to the former species of attack, it is manifest we are utterly unfit for judging of the ques-

tion concerning the quality of the contents of revelation, till we have previously studied what the contents are. If we go to work the other way, which I call preposterous, we are entirely at the mercy of the antagonist for the most essential part, the very foundation of his argument, to wit, the reality of the facts and allegations, on which all his reasonings are built. If we take things for granted on his bare affirmation, which if he has a specious manner of writing we shall have a strong propensity to do, it is a thousand to one we shall become the dupes of the grossest misrepresentation. If we have the sense and caution to perceive that we ought to suspend our judgment, till we have impartially examined the allegations in point of fact, we shall at best be perplexed and puzzled, but can never be edified or improved by so premature a study. The only thing we then can do with propriety, is to betake ourselves to the study of scripture in some such method as that which has been proposed; and before we have accomplished this, 'tis a thousand to one, that all our previous controversial reading, when we were nowise prepared to enter into the argument, will be quite forgotten, so that the least bad consequence of this perversion of the natural order is the loss of so much time and labour, and the necessity we are under of beginning the controversy a second time, if we would become masters of the question. Even in a dispute, which we may happen to hear in company, how little are we qualified to judge which of the parties hath reason on his side, if we are unacquainted with the subject of dispute? We shall possibly be capable of deciding, which is the ablest disputant; but we could not devise a more fallacious rule, though in such circumstances none is more

common, by which to determine the merits of the cause.

Let it not be pleaded in answer to this, that without such a course of study and exercises as hath been proposed, the generality of students, at least in protestant countries, have sufficient knowledge of the contents of scripture, to qualify them to judge of such controversy; for have they not had occasion, nay have they not been inured to read the sacred books themselves, and to hear them read by others, even from their infancy? But to this I reply, that as teaching in this manner has always been accompanied more or less with human explications and glosses, the learner in so early a period is extremely ill qualified to distinguish the text from the comment. Accordingly, do we not see, that with the same practice of reading scripture and hearing it read, the notions of its doctrine, imbibed by the youth, are different in different countries and in different sects? It is of importance, before the student enter on the main question, the truth of his religion, that he should be enabled to distinguish between the commandments of God, and the traditions of the elders; between the simple truth, as it is in Jesus, and the subtleties and refinements of the theorist. These are miserably blended and confounded in all the attacks that have been made on the christian religion. And what is worse, most of the answerers, having been themselves zealous partisans of some sect, have contributed to confirm and increase the confusion. The method I have proposed doth, in my opinion, bid fairest for accomplishing the end, and enabling the student, in most cases, to make the distinction. Besides, even the attacks that have been made on the external evidences, especially in re-

gard to the fulfilment of prophecies, when the argument turns on the meaning of the prediction, we are by thus familiarizing ourselves to the study of the scripture idiom, language and sentiments, prepared for understanding, and consequently for deciding upon its strength or weakness. And indeed (if we except only the abstract and metaphysical argument, that has been urged against the possibility of miraculous events as being preternatural, which is totally independent on any question of fact, and may therefore be studied at any time) the best preparation we can make, for entering into the whole controversy concerning the truth of christianity, is a critical knowledge of holy writ, together with some proficiency both in biblical and ecclesiastic history. But further, this will be found the best method, not only for enabling us to understand the controversy, but for abridging it also. We shall be in a capacity for detecting many fallacies in reasoning, and many misrepresentations of fact, which might otherwise stagger and confound us. When thus prepared, our own penetration will, in many cases, supersede the necessity of perusing refutations.

But this method will be found not only the best preparation for understanding the general controversy concerning the truth of our religion, but also for entering properly into the particular controversies, that have arisen among christians concerning articles of faith, matters of government, worship, discipline, or morals. When the adverse parties are both protestants, the point just now affirmed may with propriety be called self-evident; because the only infallible rule of decision admitted by both parties, is the scripture. And even in the disputes which subsist between protes-

tants and papists, or Roman catholics as they affect to call themselves, this knowledge of the sacred volume and history must be of the utmost consequence; since, though we do not receive for scripture all that they account canonical, yet they admit as such all the books that are received by us; and though they will not acknowledge scripture to be the only rule of faith and manners, yet as they own its inspiration, they avow it to be a rule and an unerring rule too. The exact knowledge of its contents must therefore be of the greatest moment to one who would enter the lists with a Romanist, since those of that faction cannot, consistently with their own profession, admit any thing in religion, which is contradictory to the doctrine or precepts contained in that book: so that even upon their own principles, their tenets are liable to be confuted from scripture, if we can evince the contrariety. And with regard to all the particular popish controversies, next to the knowledge of scripture, a thorough acquaintance with ecclesiastic history is of the greatest importance. Uninterrupted tradition is a much boasted and very powerful plea with them. It is impossible without such an acquaintance with church history, for any one to conceive how miserably ill this plea is adapted to support their cause. The gradual introduction of their many gross corruptions, both in doctrine and practice, is so extremely apparent to the historic student, that even a person of moderate penetration will need no other proof, either of their novelty, or of the baseness of their extraction. He will thus in the most effectual manner be convinced of the falseness of all other foundations, tradition, popes and councils, and that the Bible is that alone on which the religion of

christians can rest immoveably. He will be apt to conclude in the words of the excellent Chillingworth (whose performance deserves a most serious perusal, not more because it is a clear detection of papistical sophistry, than because it is an admirable specimen of just and acute reasoning, he will be ready, I say, to conclude in the words of that author,) "Whatsoever else they believe besides the Bible, and the plain, irrefragable, indubitable, consequences of it, well may they hold it as a matter of opinion, but as a matter of faith and religion neither can they, with coherence to their own grounds, believe it themselves, nor require the belief of it of others, without most high and most schismatical presumption. I, for my part, after a long and (as I verily believe and hope) impartial search of the *true way to eternal happiness*, do profess plainly, that I cannot find any rest for the sole of my foot, but on this rock only. I see plainly and with my own eyes, that there are popes against popes; councils against councils; some fathers against others; the same fathers against themselves; a consent of fathers of one age against a consent of fathers of another age; the church of one age against the church of another age. Traditive interpretations of scripture are pretended, but there are none to be found. No tradition, but only of scripture, can derive itself from the fountain, but may be plainly proved, either to have been brought in, in such an age after Christ, or that in such an age it was not in. In a word, there is no sufficient certainty, but of scripture only, for any considerate man to build upon." Thus far that able advocate of protestantism. So just will the remark be found upon the trial, that those branches of knowledge, which we have

advised the student to begin with, holy writ and sacred history, will beyond his conception, tend to shorten the study of all religious controversies both general and particular. The reason is obvious. It will supply him with a fund in himself, whereby he can discover the solidity or futility of almost every argument that can be advanced.

On the contrary, when one who is quite unprovided in this respect, enters on controversy either general or particular, what is the consequence? It is, I may say, invariably, one or other of these two. He is either fixed entirely in his sentiments by the first author he reads, so that the clearest proofs from reason or scripture can never shake him afterwards; or he is always the dupe of the last writer he has happened to peruse. The first is commonly the case, when there is ever so little of a previous bias from education to the principles, and a favourable opinion of the character of the author. The second holds more commonly when the bias from education, if any, is inconsiderable, and the authors on both sides ingenious and artful. Nor does this wavering in the student betray, as is commonly imagined, a want of understanding. The want it betrays is of a very different nature. It is the want of such a stock of knowledge, as is necessary to qualify the mind for judging. Or to adopt an illustration from the body; it is not the badness of his eyes, but the want of light which is the cause of his mistaking. And the best eyes in the world will not distinguish colours in the dark. It must be owned further, that even this changeableness, when it arises from such a cause as we have mentioned, shows commonly a laudable candour of temper and openness to conviction. In both cases,

however, the effect is a sufficient demonstration, that the study was premature. Mr. Pope, by his own acknowledgement, was an instance of the case last mentioned, as we learn from one of his letters to Dr. Atterbury. The prelate, it would appear, had been using his best endeavours with the poet to induce him to read some of the most celebrated authors on the popish controversy, in order to his conversion to the church of England. Mr. Pope, amongst other things, informed the bishop, that he had formerly, even when he was but fourteen years old, employed some time in reading the best writers on both sides the question, and that the consequence had always been, that he was protestant and papist alternately, according to the principles of the author, who had last engaged his attention. He adds very pertinently, "I am afraid most seekers are in the same case; and when they stop, they are not so properly converted, as outwitted." Mr. Pope cannot, I think, be justly accused even by his enemies of a defect of understanding. In this particular, he was considerably above the ordinary standard. But being, in all probability, at that early period, totally deficient in those materials, which could enable him to judge for himself in controversies about the sense of revelation, it was inevitable, that he should be swayed by turns by the different representations of the different champions. In other words, not having in himself those lights that were necessary, the knowledge of scripture and the knowledge of history, to enable him to see with his own eyes, he was forced to see with those of other people; and his impartiality itself led him to be influenced most by the nearest, by him who had made the last impression. So much for the advanta

ges which will accrue to the student from a proper prosecution of the plan I have been recommending.

But, it may be said, suppose this knowledge of which you speak, is once attained, Must he proceed any further; and if he must, In what manner? In answer to these questions, I observe first, that when once the knowledge I mentioned is attained, he has accomplished by far the most essential part of the study of christian theology, he hath acquired that which is both in itself most valuable, and can best prepare him to enter with understanding into the other, and less essential parts of the study. Things however are rendered necessary to people in certain stations from certain accidental circumstances, which would otherwise be of little consequence in themselves. Of this sort are many things which the theologian must not altogether overlook. Some books deserve to be read on account of the useful instruction they contain; some again on account of the vogue they have obtained, and often merely that we may be qualified to say with greater confidence, that they contain nothing of any value; some, because they inform us of what is done, others, because they inform us of what is thought. And as the qualities of different books and the acquisitions we make by them are very different, so the motives that influence us are no less various: sometimes we read to obtain a supply of knowledge, oftener to obtain a supply of conversation, and not seldom to pass tolerably over a vacant hour, which we are at a loss how to spend. In determining the comparative merits of books, there can be no question, that those which convey useful knowledge and deserve a reading on their own account, are in a class greatly superior to

those which afford only matter of conversation, and require a share of our attention on account of the esteem of others; and which is perhaps nearly coincident, those which instruct us in permanent truths, and the actual productions of eventful time, are of a higher order, than those which entertain us only with the vague opinions and unintelligible sophisms of men. Books of the third class, or pieces of mere amusement, I throw out of the question altogether. Now as to those of the second, if every man were unconnected with and independent on his fellows, such reading (farther at least than were necessary to give us some notion of the wanderings of the human mind) it would perhaps be better to dispense with entirely. But as that is not the case, and as our own happiness in a great measure, and the very end of our being depend on our utility, it is necessary, that, in our studies, this should command a considerable share of our regard. It is not by undervaluing their sentiments, that we can ever hope to be profitable to others, and to correct what is amiss in them. It is necessary that in this respect we should even follow the wanderer into his devious tracks, that we may be in a condition to lay hold of him, and reclaim him by reconducting him into the right way.

Now to make application of these observations to the present subject, I readily admit, that when once the young divine hath acquired the knowledge of the scriptures above recommended and illustrated, and hath added to this the history of our religion, he hath obtained all, or nearly all that is instructive, that is truly valuable on its own account, but he hath not obtained all that may be necessary to fit him for instructing

others. For this purpose, he must be prepared to enter the lists with gainsayers on their own ground, and to fight them at their own weapons. With the fund of substantial knowledge above pointed out, he will hardly run the risk of being seduced by the sophistry of others, but he may be both surprised and silenced by it. We may perceive perfectly the inconclusiveness of the argument of an adversary, the moment it is produced, to which however we may not be able on the sudden to give a pertinent and satisfactory reply. Besides, a deficiency in this secondary kind of knowledge is perhaps more apt, in the judgment of the world, to fix on a character the stain of ignorance, than a defect in the primary kind. And how much this stigma, however unjustly fixt, will, by prejudicing the minds of men, prevent the success of a teacher, those who understand any thing of human nature will easily judge.

I will just now put a case, the decision of which will be thought by several to be problematical, and by many to be extremely clear, though of these no doubt some would decide one way, and some another. With the reservation of sacred writ and sacred history, under which I include all that can serve to enlighten pagan, Jewish and christian antiquity, I will suppose that all our theological books, systems, controversies, commentaries, on all the different sides, were to be annihilated at once; the question is, whether the christian world and the republic of letters would be a gainer or a loser by this extraordinary event. Let it not be imagined, that I mean by this supposition, to consider all such performances as being on a level in point of excellency. Nothing can be farther from my view. I know that the difference among them in respect of

merit is exceeding great. Nor is it my intention to insinuate, that there would not be a real loss, when considered separately, in the suppression of many ingenious and many useful observations. But as there would on the other hand be manifest gain in the extinction of so much sophistry, the destruction of so many artful snares laid for seducing, the annihilation of the materials of so much contention, I may say, of the fuel for kindling such terrible conflagrations, my question regards only the balance upon the whole, and whether the loss would not be more than compensated by the profit. Can the christian, at least can the protestant, think, that there would be a want of any thing essential, whilst the word of God remained, and every thing that might be helpful, not to bias men to particular opinions, but to throw light upon its idiom and language? Is it possible, that any man of common understanding should imagine, we could ever come to differ so widely about the sense and meaning of scripture, if we did not take such different ways of setting out, and if almost every one were not at pains to get his mind preoccupied by some human composition or teaching, before he enters on the examination of that rule? And would it be a mighty loss to christians, that the seeds (I say not of their differences in opinion, but) of such unrelenting prejudices, such implacable animosities against one another, were totally destroyed? Shall it be regarded as a formidable danger, that all, by being thus compelled to a sort of uniformity in their method of study, should arrive at an unanimity, not so much in their tenets, as in their dispositions and affections? For that this would be the consequence, there is the greatest reason in the world to believe; as in nine

hundred and ninety nine instances out of a thousand, all the differences among christians are the manifest fruit of the different biasses previously given to their minds.

Those who are profoundly read in theological controversy, before they enter on the critical examination of the divine oracles, if they have the discernment to discover the right path, which their former studies have done much to prevent, and if they have the fortitude to persevere in keeping that path, will quickly be sensible, that they have more to unlearn than to learn; and that the acquisition of truth is not near so difficult a task, as to attain a superiority over rooted errors and old prejudices. Let it not be imagined from this, that I condemn all controversial writing. There are certain circumstances, I am sensible, which render it necessary. Were it indeed possible, that all controversies in divinity were buried in one grave without the hope of resurrection, I should think it incomparably better for christendom; but it would be extremely hard if error were allowed to attack, and truth not permitted to defend herself. If there must be debates, let them be fair and open, let both sides be heard with candour and impartiality. This is the only sure way of giving all possible advantage to the truth. It were certainly better for mankind that no deadly weapons whatever were used or known among men; but if villains will use them for the purposes of mischief, it would be very hard, that honest men should be denied the use of them in self defence.

I would not by this be thought to insinuate, that these two cases are in all respects parallel, or that the patrons of error were always actuated by villainous

designs. God forbid that I were so uncharitable. Our Lord himself hath assured us that those who would raise the most cruel persecutions against his disciples, would seriously think, that in so doing they did God service. He hath little knowledge of mankind who doth not perceive that men are often just as sincere in their intentions in the defence of erroneous, as of true, opinions. The only purpose of my similitude was to signify, that if honesty must be allowed to wage at least a defensive war against villainy, the same privilege should be allowed to truth against falsehood. Here indeed it may be justly said, that the greater freedom ought to be permitted to both parties, as the distinction is not so easily made in the latter case, as in the former. To distinguish the just from the unjust in a quarrel is commonly a matter of much greater facility, than to distinguish the true from the false in a debate. But as it may be justly said, that errors in religion have generally more or less, directly or indirectly, a bad influence on practice, they ought always to be guarded against with all the precaution of which we are capable. Nor is there another way of guarding against them, that I know of, but by an unprejudiced and impartial scrutiny into all matters really questionable.

I have observed already, that after such an examination as hath been recommended of the sacred oracles, and of the histories to which they relate, and with which they are connected, both Jewish and christian, the attentive and judicious student will not probably find much occasion, for his own sake, to canvass the works of controvertists. It may however be of considerable consequence for the sake of others, that one who is to

be vested with a public character in the church, should not be entirely unacquainted with their writings. The first controversy that claims our attention is the deistical, as this strikes directly at the foundation of all. Could one have an opportunity of studying this at his leisure, in what order he pleased, and had all the necessary books at his command, I should advise him to begin with those which relate to the intrinsic evidence of our religion, then to proceed to what regards the extrinsic evidence, first prophecy, because most nearly related to the former branch, then miracles, and lastly every collateral confirmation that may be brought from history. But as it rarely happens, that one can prosecute a plan of this kind in the order or manner in which it is proposed, there is no great matter, though you take occasion of perusing the books of greatest name on the one side or the other as they fall in your way. The only thing I insist on, is that this study ought to be posterior altogether to the study of sacred writ and sacred history, if you would enter into it with understanding, if you would not expose yourselves to be misled and imposed on, mistaking the specious for the solid, not enough enlightened to distinguish the plausible from the true. As to the particular questions that have arisen among christians, those which claim our first attention are, doubtless, such as subsist between protestants and papists. Next to these the several distinguishing tenets which characterize the various tribes or sects, that come under the common name of protestant, Lutherans, Socinians, Arminians, Calvinists, Antinomians; and to these we may add those questions, which have been for some time hotly agitated in this island;

for though several of them are in themselves apparently of little moment, yet they have been productive of momentous consequences. Such are the questions in relation to the externals of worship and forms of government, about ceremonies, sacraments, and ordination, and which constitute the principal matters in dispute between the church of England and Dissenters, and by which several of our sects, such as Anabaptists, Nonjurors and Quakers, are chiefly discriminated. As to the numerous controversies which have in former ages made a noise in the church, and are now extinct, or which are still agitated in distant regions, Greece or Asia for example, it is enough with regard to these, to know what church history hath recorded concerning their rise, progress and decline, concerning the quibbles and phrases (for we can rarely call them principles) which have afforded the chief matter of their altercation. I do not speak in this manner, as if all our controversies in the West were of themselves of greater importance than the eastern disputes, or as if the modern were superior to the ancient. I am far from thinking, that the cavils and logomachies of our Supralapsarians and Sublapsarians, Remonstrants, Antiremonstrants, and Universalists of the last age, or of our Seceders both burgesses and antiburgesses, Reliefmen, Cameronians, Moravians, and Sandemanians, are one jot more intelligible or more edifying, than those of the Sebellians, Eutychians and Nestorians and Monothelites and Monophysites, and a thousand other ancient and oriental distinctions. The only thing that can give superior consequence to the former with us, is their vicinity in time and place, and the propriety there is, that for the sake of others, the

christian pastor should be prepared for warding the blows of those adversaries, to whom his people may be exposed. I say for the sake of others, for we may venture to affirm, that no man of common understanding, who hath candidly and assiduously studied holy writ in the manner we have recommended, can find the smallest occasion for his own sake of entering into such labyrinths of words, such extravagant ravings, as would disgrace even the name of sophistry; for even that term, bad as it is, implies art and ingenuity, and at least an appearance of reason, which their wild declamation can very rarely boast. I am not of the mind, that the student should think it necessary to inquire into the several grounds and pleas of all the above mentioned sects and parties. Some of them, as the principal heads of our disputes with the Romanists, and the chief questions that have been started concerning the divinity of Christ, his expiation of sin by the sacrifice of himself, and concerning the operation of the spirit, it will be proper to canvass more thoroughly. As to those of less note, since it is chiefly for the sake of others our theologian studies such questions, he must judge how far it is needful by the situation in which he finds himself.

LECTURE VI.

Method of prosecuting our Inquiries in Polemic Divinity.....The use to be made of Scholia, Paraphrases, and Commentaries....Danger of relying on human guidance in matters of Religion.

I NOW come more particularly to the method of prosecuting these inquiries in polemic divinity. The briefest, and, therefore, not the worst way, is by means of systems. And of these, I own, I generally like the shortest best. My reason is, that all of them, without exception, have on certain topics, and in some degree or other, departed from the simplicity of the truth as it is in Jesus. They have indulged too much to imagination, and fallen at times into the dotage about questions and strifes of words which minister contention, and not godly edifying, and they have not sufficiently known, or acknowledged, the limits on those sublime subjects, which God hath assigned to the human faculties. It ought never to be forgotten by the student, that the deity hath prescribed bounds to the human mind, as well as to the mighty ocean, and in effect tells us in his word, "Thus far shalt thou come and no farther, and here shall thy airy flights, thy proud excursions be staid." If the student can, let him provide himself in some of the most approved systems on the different sides. 'Tis error, not truth, vice, not virtue that fears the light. You may rest

assured of it, that, if any teacher exclaims against such a fair and impartial inquiry, and would limit you to the works of one side only, the reason is, whatever he may pretend, and however much he may disguise it even from himself, he is more solicitous to make you his own follower, than the follower of Christ, and a blind retainer to the sect to which he has attached himself, than a well instructed friend of truth, without any partial respects to persons or parties. On reading an article in one system, let him peruse the correspondent article in the others, and examine impartially by scripture as he proceeds; and in this manner, let him advance from one article to another, till he hath canvassed the whole. 'Tis more than probable, that on some points he will conclude them all to be in the wrong; because all may go farther than holy writ affords a foundation for deciding, a thing by no means uncommon; but in no case, wherein they differ, can more than one be in the right. If he shall find it expedient afterwards to inquire more narrowly into some branches of controversy, he will have an opportunity of reading books written on purpose on both sides the question. If he should not have it in his power to consult different systems, he will find a good deal of some of our principal controversies in Burnet's exposition of the articles, and Pearson on the Creed. When thus far advanced, he may occasionally as he finds a difficulty (and in my opinion he ought not otherwise) consult scholia and commentaries. Of these I like the first best, both because they are briefer, and because they promise less. The scholiast proposes only to assist you in interpreting some passages, which, in the course of his study, he has met with things that serve

to illustrate; whereas the commentator sets out with the express purpose of explaining every thing. I have the less faith in him on that account, and am ready to say with Horace, "Quid dignum tanto feret hic promissor hiatu."

I own, for I will tell you freely what I think, that of all the kinds of expositors, I like *least* the paraphrast. There is in him, an appearance of presumption, both in giving what he seems to imagine a more proper style to the inspired writer, and in his manner of interweaving his own sentiments indiscriminately with those delivered by unerring wisdom, with which neither the commentator nor the scholiast is chargeable; for in these the text and commentary are never confounded by being blended. Another fault in paraphrases, of which few or no commentaries, that I know of, can be accused, is that you have, by way of explanation, in the former, to wit the paraphrase, the sentiments of the paraphrast alone; whereas in the latter, the commentary, you have often the opinions of others also, with their reasons, which, notwithstanding the partiality of the relater, will to the judicious reader often appear preferable. I do not say however, that paraphrase can never be a useful mode of explication, though I own, that the cases wherein it may be reckoned not improper, nor altogether unuseful, are not numerous. As the only valuable aim of this species of exposition is to give greater perspicuity to the text, obscurity is the only reasonable plea for employing it. When the style is extremely concise or figurative, or when there are frequent allusions to customs or incidents now not generally known, to add as much as is necessary for supplying an ellipsis, explaining an unusual figure, or

suggesting an unknown fact, or custom alluded to, may serve to render scripture more intelligible, without taking much from its energy by the paraphrastic dress it is put in. But if the use and occasions of paraphrase be only such, as have been now represented, it is evident, that there are but a few books of holy writ, and but certain portions of those few, that require to be treated in this manner. No historical piece is written with greater simplicity and perspicuity than the history contained in the Bible, and both as to facts and moral instructions, we have not any thing more eminent in this respect, than the gospels. Yet nothing is more common, than the attempt of paraphrasing these. And indeed the notions, which the generality of paraphrasts seem to entertain on this subject, are curious. If we judge from their productions, we must conclude, that they have considered such a size of subject-matter (if I may be indulged in the expression) as affording a proper foundation for a composition of such a magnitude, and have therefore laid it down as a maxim, from which in their practice they do not often depart, that the most commodious way of giving to the work the proposed extent, is that equal portions of the text (perspicuous or obscure it matters not) should be equally protracted*. Thus regarding only quantity, they view their text, and parcel it, and treat it in much the same manner, as gold-beaters and wire-drawers do the metals on which their art is employed. Verbosity is the proper character of this kind of composition. The professed design of the paraphrast is to say in many words what his text expresseth in few: accord-

* See Philosophy of Rhetoric, Book III. Chap. 2.

ingly all the writers of this class must be at pains to provide themselves in a sufficient stock of synonymas, epithets, expletives, circumlocutions and tautologies, which are in fact the necessary implements of their craft. A deficiency of words is no doubt oftener than the contrary, the cause of obscurity. Brevis esse laboro, obscurus fio: but this evil may also be the effect of an exuberance. By a multiplicity of words the sentiment is not set off and accommodated, but like David equipt in Saul's armour, it is incumbered and opprest.

Yet this is not the only, nor perhaps the worst consequence resulting from this manner of treating sacred writ. In the very best compositions of this kind, that can be expected, the gospel may be compared to a rich wine of a high flavour, diluted in such a quantity of water, as renders it extremely vapid. This would be the case, if the paraphrase (which is indeed hardly possible) took no tincture from the opinions of the paraphrast, but exhibited faithfully, though insipidly, the sentiments of the text. Whereas in all those paraphrases we have seen, the gospel may more justly be compared to such a wine as hath been mentioned, so much adulterated with a liquor of a very different taste and quality, that little or nothing of its original relish and properties can be discovered. Accordingly in one paraphrase, Jesus Christ appears in the character of a bigotted papist, in another of a flaming protestant; in one he argues with all the sophistry of the Jesuit, in another he declaims with all the fanaticism of the Jansenist; in one you trace the metaphysical ratiocinations of Arminius, in another you recognise the bold conclusions of Gomarus; and you hear the language of a man who has thoroughly imbibed the

system of one or other of our christian rabbies. So various and so opposite are the characters, which in those performances our Lord is made to sustain, and the dialects which he is made to speak. How different is his own character and dialect? If we be susceptible of the impartiality, and have attained the knowledge requisite to constitute us proper judges in these matters, we shall find, in what he says, nothing that can be thought to favour the subtle disquisitions of a sect. His language is not, like that of all dogmatists, the language of a bastard philosophy, which under the pretence of methodising religion hath corrupted it, and in less or more tinged all the parties into which christendom is divided. His language is not so much the language of the head, as of the heart; his object is not science but wisdom, his discourses accordingly abound more in sentiments, than in opinions. His diction in general is so plain, and his instructions in the main are so obvious and striking, that it is scarely possible to conceive another design that any man can have in paraphrasing them, than to give what I may call an evangelical dress to his own notions, to make the passages of our Lord's history, his sayings and parables serve as a kind of vehicle for conveying into the minds of the readers the opinions of the expositor. And is not this actually the effect they commonly produce in their too implicit and habitual readers? Are you willing to call the ingenious and learned Erasmus, your father and leader and master in religious truths? Do you desire to understand christianity no otherwise than he is pleased to exhibit it? Have recourse to his Latin paraphrase of the New Testament. Seek the religion of Jesus only there,

and your end is answered. Would you rather pay this homage to some of our English interpreters? Suppose for example the mild, the dispassionate, the abstract, the rational Dr. Clarke. Let his paraphrase on the gospels serve you, as all the information needful of the history and teaching of Jesus: or if the devout, the warm, the serious Dr. Doddridge more engages you, make his Family Expositor your only counsellor as to the mind and will of Christ. And these methods, I'll answer for them, are the surest and most effectual, for making you become in religion the servants and disciples of men. But if, on the contrary, it is neither the gospel of Erasmus, nor the gospel of Clarke, nor the gospel of Doddridge, but the gospel of Jesus Christ, that you want to be acquainted with; if ye would not that your faith should stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God; if sensible, that ye are bought with a price, ye are resolved not to be the servants of men; if you gratefully and generously purpose to stand fast in the liberty where with Christ hath made you free, to call no man father on the earth, having one Father who is in heaven, and to call no man rabbi, leader, head or master on the earth, knowing that ye yourselves are all brethren, and have one leader, head and master Christ, who is at the right hand of God; if this, I say, is your settled purpose, read, habitually read his history and divine lessons, as they are recorded by those, whom he himself hath employed, and whom his spirit hath guided in the work, the evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

I shall tell you honestly my opinion. I have consulted paraphrases occasionally, and those too, written on different sides; I have compared them carefully

with the original work they pretended to illustrate; and abstracting from all other faults and defects, I have always found them, upon the whole, much inferior to the text in point of perspicuity. The latter hath ever appeared to me the more intelligible of the two. I do not say, that you may not consult them occasionally, as you would any other kind of exposition or commentary. But I repeat it, with regard to all kinds of interpretation whatever, that it is only occasionally, as when some difficulty occurs of which one is at the time at a loss to think of a satisfactory solution, or when one is desirous to examine, on a particular point, the different hypotheses of different parties, that we should have recourse to them. My idea with regard to commentators, scholiasts, paraphrasts and the whole tribe of expositors, is that they are to be consulted in the same way, and no otherwise, than we do glossaries and dictionaries; which is only when any thing perplexeth us, and we think we cannot do easily without them. But no one of them whatever, ought to be made our guide and conductor in carrying us forward through the sacred pages.

Further in the choice of those we should consult; there can be no doubt but those who have been most eminent for their critical knowledge and freedom of spirit (such as becomes men not servilely attached to a particular sect or party) are entitled to the preference. The learning, as well as the critical acumen and ingenuity of Grotius, have stamped a value upon his commentaries, especially on the gospels, which has hardly been equalled by any that has come after him. Yet I am far from saying, he is to be followed implicitly. He has fallen into gross mistakes, which men of much

inferior genius have detected and avoided. Hammond and Whitby as commentators have their merit. Maldonat (though a Romish commentator) is not unworthy the attention of the impartial searcher after truth. But still it must be remembered, that they are to be consulted occasionally only, and we are to exercise our own judgments in deciding. In arguments and objections, as well as in textuary difficulties, the student's first resource should be his own reflections; when the sense of any portion of scripture is concerned, a critical examination of the passage and other similar pa sages should come next, and when these do not answer, the aid of scholiasts, &c. should be the last resource. Let it be a standing maxim, that the student's business is more an habitual exercise of reflection, than barely of reading and remembrance. Are we no longer babes? Have we arrived at some maturity in christian knowledge? Are our faculties at length enlarged and strengthened by exercise, and shall we hesitate to employ these faculties, when to leave them unemployed, is the surest way possible to debilitate them? When we may walk like men, shall we require to be carried, or at least to be led by the hand, or supported by leading-strings like children?

I know there are many very serious persons, who nevertheless attached by custom to human guidance in matters of religion, will not be able to relish such an indiscriminate rejection of expositors. One favourite author at least they would have excepted, and cannot allow themselves to think, that one is not more secure against error by the help of his direction, than by the light of holy writ alone. Nothing is more difficult than to convince men of the most glaring inconsisten-

cies, to which, prior to reflection, they have become habituated, and which therefore have acquired an inveteracy hardly to be cured. Scripture, they readily admit, to be the only divine and infallible rule; all human interpreters, they will frankly acknowledge, to be fallible, and yet 'tis manifest that in human guidance they think there is greater safety. They will indeed tell you, that it is by the unerring decision of scripture that all the doctrines of erring men are to be judged; and yet what the sense of scripture is, they will learn no otherwise, than from the doctrines of erring men. Can any thing be more manifest, than that it is an empty compliment they pay the scriptures, and that their only confidence is in man? Suppose, for example, that a body politic, or community, were to constitute certain persons judges of all those who should be impeached before them in any cause civil or criminal, declaring themselves resolved to see that the sentences of the judges shall be rigorously executed, but at the same time signifying that they were also resolved to constitute the parties the interpreters of the sentences in their own case, and that according to their interpretation only, the execution was to proceed; could any thing be more absurd, more selfsubversive than such a constitution? Could any thing be more nugatory than the power they pretended to confer on the judges? Yet is not the manner in which scripture is complimented, by almost all sects, at least all sectarists, with an authority merely nominal, exactly similar? Shall I be thought to endanger the cause of truth, the cause of protestantism and of the reformation, by insisting so much on what this very cause hath laid down as a fundamental principle? Is not scripture, with all pro-

testants, the only tribunal, in the last resort, in all questions of faith? Do they admit an appeal from the verdict of this supreme arbitress, either to the judgment of individuals, or to that of any societies of men, whatever denomination you may please to give them, or with whatever jurisdiction you may think fit to vest them? Is not her decision, on the contrary, admitted on all hands to be final? Hear the church of England on this point. Article sixth, entitled, "*Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation.* Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." And again article twenty-first, entitled, "*Of the Authority of General Councils.* When they (general councils) be gathered together (for as much as they be an assembly of men whereof all be not governed with the spirit and word of God) they may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God. Wherefore things ordained by them as necessary to salvation, have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared, that they be taken out of holy scripture." Hear on the same head the avowed sentiments of the church of Scotland. Westminster Confession, first chapter, entitled, *Of the Holy Scripture*, sixth paragraph. "The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from scripture; unto which nothing at any time is to be added." Again chapter thirty-first, entitled, *Of*

Synods and Councils, fourth paragraph. "All synods or councils, since the apostles' time, whether general or particular, may err, and many have erred, therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith or practice, but to be read as an help in both."

I am aware that an argument may be drawn (which to some will no doubt appear plausible) from these very declarations. If private men have erred, if even synods and councils have erred, would it not be extreme arrogance in me, may one say, unassisted and alone in my inquiries, to think that I should escape error, altogether? But how easily is this plea retorted. If private persons, if even the wise and learned have erred, if synods and councils have erred, what security have I in their direction? Yet that all these have erred, egregiously erred, appears unquestionably from their mutual contradictions and jars. On the other side, there is no such ground of fear from the aforesaid reflection (as one would at first imagine) that in our inquiries into scripture we shall err materially, even though alone and unassisted by any human expositor or council. I have before now assigned the reason, why human interpretations of scripture, whether private or what hath been called authoritative, are, notwithstanding the perspicuity of that book, so infinitely various. The same would be the fate of any book whatever that were treated in the same manner. Men begin with deriving their opinions from another source, and being perfectly full of these opinions and wedded to them, they have recourse to scripture, not to discover the doctrines contained there, but to discover there their own opinions, that is, in other words, to exercise all their art and ingenuity to give such a turn

to the expressions of scripture, as will make them seem to authorize their favourite notions. Often men's worldly interest too, which blindeth even the wise, is concerned on a side. That scripture should be intelligible, is implied in the very idea of its being a revelation of the will of God. That this revelation stands in need of a revelation in order to be understood, that is in other words, is itself no revelation at all, is indeed the doctrine of the Romanists, and a doctrine of importance with them, inconsistent as it is, to make room for their infallible interpreter. But the protestant doctrine of the sufficiency of scripture, without any such interpreter, doth clearly imply, that it is possest of all necessary perspicuity. How strongly is this affirmed in the first chapter of the Westminster Confession above quoted, the seventh paragraph? "All things in scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them." In the judgment of the reformed churches therefore, in the judgment of our own in particular, the study of scripture itself is not only the safest, but the only safe way of arriving at the knowledge of divine truth, since it is both the only infallible rule, and in all essential matters sufficiently perspicuous. And permit me to add, were there greater risk of error than there is, error itself must be less culpable to those who enter seriously and impartially on this examination, and thus take the best method in their power for avoiding it, than it

is to those, who blindly and lazily admit opinions for no better reason, than because they are the opinions of the country, or of the sect, in which they have been educated, or of some celebrated doctor whom they have been early taught to revere. Such, it is manifest, have no better reason for their being christians, than the Jews have for their not being christians, the Turks for their being Mahometans, or the Tartars for their being pagans; and whatever apology may be made for the illiterate, and those whose time is mostly occupied in earning daily bread, surely there is no excuse for those, who have had the advantage of a liberal education, and who have the prospect of serving in the church as lights to others.

But should any be disposed to object, How is it possible to study by the aid of human compositions, and avoid the influence of human teachers? Though the method you have recommended is by no means that which is commonly pursued; yet it requires a good deal of reading and study, besides that of scripture, as well as the common method. You do not enjoin us to begin with systems and controversies, and commentators, and scholiasts, and paraphrasts; on the contrary, with these, you tell us, the study of theology should be concluded and not commenced: but do you not require us to apply directly to certain histories and antiquities, do you not desire us to betake ourselves to grammars and lexicons, to have recourse to the study of languages, particularly the Oriental and the Greek, to become acquainted with the scriptures in the original tongues, and with the ancient translation of the seventy? All this is most certain truth, but do you observe no difference in the effect which these

different methods may be expected naturally to produce? We recommend the study of the scriptures, as containing the whole of christian theology. But then the scriptures were written neither in this age, nor in this country, nor in our language. We have indeed a translation of them, which is in the main a good one, but which, though it may serve the purposes of the generality of christians, ought not to satisfy the ministers of religion, who should be in a capacity of solving the doubts and removing the difficulties of others. We do not ascribe infallibility to any translator; and therefore when this term is applied to holy writ, it is of the original only, that it must in strictness be understood. Had a complete revelation been given at once in our own age and country, and had been committed to writing in our own tongue, it is manifest that little or no human learning would have been necessary. But in all the respects mentioned the actual case greatly differed. A long tract of ages is comprehended between the commencement and the sealing or conclusion of this revelation, the languages in which it is written are foreign, the country which was the scene of those wonderful exhibitions it contains of divine power and mercy is remote, and the period, in which that whole manifestation was closed, is at the distance of many centuries from the present. Out of these very circumstances duly attended to, results the necessity of all those studies we have recommended. If the oracles of God are delivered in foreign languages, it is certain, that unless we are supplied with supernatural means of coming at this knowledge, the study of the languages is the only natural and ordinary means. It were easy to show the necessity of all the other studies

from the same principles. The scriptures were written in distant ages, and allude to many transactions, then, but not now, familiarly known in the world, addrest to people who differed from us, as much in manners, ceremonies, customs, and opinions, as in language. An acquaintance with these transactions and differences therefore, as far as we can attain it, is in effect, as hath been often hinted already, a more thorough acquaintance with the scriptural idiom and dialect. If after this we proceed to the study of systems and commentaries and controversies, we have acquired a fund of our own, from which we may form a judgment in regard to their jarring sentiments. But if without any such fund for judging, without a competency of knowledge either in scripture-language or scripture-history we have immediate recourse to system-makers and expositors and controversialists, we are perfectly bewildered, and must therefore either deliver ourselves up implicitly to the guidance of some one or more whom we pitch upon at random, or be lost in absolute scepticism. The study of language and history doth not indeed present you with particular opinions, formed upon particular passages of scripture; it is for that very reason quite above the suspicion of partiality. But it doth what is much more valuable. It furnishes us with those first principles of knowledge, from which an attentive and judicious person will be enabled to draw proper conclusions, and form just opinions for himself. The other way is indeed better adapted to gratify the laziness of the sciolist, who would be thought learned, but cannot bear, even for the sake of learning, to be at the least expense of thought and reflection.

The man who advises such an easy method, which I acknowledge is by far the commonest, is like one who tells you, "This writing, the contents of which you are anxious to be acquainted with, you need not take the trouble to peruse yourself. It is but dimly written, and we have now only twilight. I have better eyes, and am acquainted with the character. Do but attend, and I shall read it distinctly in your hearing." On the other hand he who with me advises the other method is like one who says, "Take this writing into your own hand. I shall procure you a supply of light, and though the character is rather old, yet with some attention, in comparing one part with another, you will soon be familiarized to it, and may then read it for yourself." In a matter of little moment, and where there can be no danger of deception, it may be said, and justly said, the first method is the best, because the easiest and quickest. But suppose it is an affair of great importance to you, and that there is real danger of deception; suppose further, that your anxiety having led you to employ different readers, the consequence hath been, that each reader, to your great astonishment, discovers things in the writing, which were not discovered by the rest; nay more, that the discoveries of the different readers are contradictory to one another; would you not then be satisfied, that the only part a reasonable man could take, would be to recur to the second method mentioned? Now this is precisely the case with the point in hand.

I shall illustrate the difference between these methods by one other example, and then have done. You intend to travel into a foreign country, where you propose to transact a great deal of business with the

natives. You go, I shall first suppose, without knowing any thing of the language of the country. In all the affairs you have to transact with the inhabitants, as you find yourself unable to convey to them directly your sentiments, or to apprehend theirs, in the only manner they are able to communicate them; as you daily receive letters, which you cannot read, or give a return to, in a language that can be read by them, you are compelled every moment to have recourse to interpreters, a method extremely cumbersome, tedious, and dangerous at the best. You are entirely at the mercy of those interpreters; their want of knowledge, or their want of honesty, may be equally prejudicial to you. A very slight blunder of their's, arising from an imperfect acquaintance with either language, may be productive of consequences the most ruinous to your affairs. Let us now again suppose you take a different method. You make it your first object to study the language, and are become a tolerable proficient in it, before you go abroad, or at least before you enter on any important business with the natives. This, though a harder task at first setting out, greatly facilitates your intercourse with the people afterwards, and gives you a certain security and independence in all your transactions with them, which it is impossible you could ever have otherwise enjoyed. You may then occasionally and safely, where any doubt ariseth, consult an interpreter; the resources in point of knowledge, which you have provided for yourself, will prove a sufficient check on him, to prevent his having it in his power to deceive you in a matter of moment. I shall leave you, gentlemen, to make the application of these two suppositions at your leisure.

ON PULPIT ELOQUENCE.

LECTURE I.

Importance of the Study, and Objections against it answered....Helps for the attainment of the Art.

It is not enough for the christian minister, that he be instructed in the science of theology, unless he has the skill to apply his knowledge, to answer the different purposes of the pastoral charge. And the first thing, that on this article seems to merit our attention, is the consideration of the minister, in the character of a public speaker; and that, both in his addresses to God on the part of the people in worship, and his addresses to the people on the part of God in preaching. Of the importance of this last part of the character, as a public teacher, no one can reasonably doubt, who considers that it was one great part, if not the principal part of the charge which the apostles received from our Lord, Math. xxviii. 19, 20, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." And again, Mark xvi. 15, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." And with-

out derogating from those solemn institutions of our religion, which in after times came to be denominated sacraments, preaching may in one view, at least, be said to be of more consequence than they, in as much as a suitable discharge of the business of a teacher undoubtedly requires abilities superior to those requisite for the proper performance of the other, a part in comparison merely ministerial or official. It is besides the great means of conversion as well as of edification. "Faith cometh by hearing," says the apostle. The ministry of our Lord, to his kinsmen the Jews, consisted chiefly in teaching; for the evangelist John iv. 2, expressly tells us that Jesus baptized none; this, as comparatively an underwork, was entrusted entirely to his disciples. And the apostle Paul acquaints the Corinthians i. 1, 17, that Christ sent him not to baptize, but to preach the gospel; that the latter and not the former was the principal end of his mission. When it pleased God by the conversion of Cornelius the Roman centurion to open the door of faith to the Gentiles, no less a person than Peter the first of the apostolical college was selected for announcing to him and his family the gospel of Christ; but after they were converted by his preaching, the apostle did not consider it as any impropriety to commit the care of baptizing them to meaner hands. "He (that is, Peter,) commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." Acts x. 48. What hath been said however, is by no means intended to arraign the propriety of limiting to a lower number, in churches which are already constituted, the power of dispensing the sacraments, than is done in regard to the power of preaching. The near connection which the former has with discipline

and order in a christian society already established, affords a very good reason for this difference. But if teaching is a matter of so much consequence, and if the proper discharge of this duty is a matter of principal difficulty, it ought doubtless to employ a considerable part of the student's time and attention that he may be properly prepared for it. Indeed it may be said, that the study of the science of theology is itself a preparation, and in part it no doubt is so, as it furnishes him with the materials; but the materials alone will not serve his purpose, unless he has acquired the art of using them. And it is this art in preaching which I denominate *christian* or *pulpit eloquence.* To know is one thing; and to be capable of communicating knowledge is another.

I am sensible however, that there are many pious christians, who are startled at the name of eloquence when applied to the christian teacher; they are disposed to consider it as setting an office, which in its nature is spiritual, and in its origin divine, too much on a footing with those which are merely human and secular. And this turn of thinking I have always found to proceed from one or other of these two causes; either from a mistake of what is meant by eloquence, or from a misapprehension of some passages of holy writ in relation to the sacred function. First, it arises from a mistaken notion of the import of the word. It often happens both among philosophers and divines that violent and endless disputes are carried on by adverse parties, which, were they to begin by settling a definition of the term whereon the question turns, would vanish in an instant. Were these people then, who appear to differ from us, on the propriety of em-

ploying eloquence, to give an explication of the ideas they comprehend under the term *eloquence* or oratory, we should doubtless get from them some such account as this, a knack, or artifice by which the periods of a discourse are curiously and harmoniously strung together, decorated with many flowery images, the whole entirely calculated to set off the speaker's art by pleasing the ear and amusing the fancy of the hearers, but by no means calculated either to inform their understandings or to engage their hearts. Perhaps those people will be surprised, when I tell them, that commonly no discourses whatever, not even the homeliest, have less of true eloquence, than such frothy harangues, as perfectly suit their definition. If this, then, is all they mean to inveigh against under the name *eloquence*, I will join issue with them with all my heart. Nothing can be less worthy the study or attention of a wise man, and much more may this be said of a christian pastor, than such a futile acquisition as that above described. But if, on the contrary, nothing else is meant by eloquence, in the use of all the wisest and the best who have written on the subject, but that art or talent, whereby the speech is adapted to produce in the hearer the great end which the speaker has, or at least ought to have principally in view, it is impossible to doubt the utility of the study ; unless people will be absurd enough to question, whether there be any difference between speaking to the purpose and speaking from the purpose, expressing one's self intelligibly or unintelligibly, reasoning in a manner that is conclusive and satisfactory, or in such a way as can convince nobody, fixing the attention and moving the

affections of an audience, or leaving them in a state perfectly listless and unconcerned.

But, as I signified already, there are prejudices against this study in the christian orator, arising from another source, the promises of the immediate influence of the divine spirit, the commands of our Lord to his disciples, to avoid all concern and solicitude on this article, and the example of some of the apostles who disclaimed expressly the advantages resulting from the study of rhetoric, or indeed of any human art, or institute whatever. In answer to such objections, I must beg leave to ask, are we not in the promises of our Saviour, to distinguish those, which were made to his disciples, merely as christians, or his followers in the way to the kingdom, from those made indeed to the same persons, but considered in the character of apostles, the promulgators of his doctrine among Jews and pagans, and the first founders of his church? Are we entitled to apply to ourselves those promises made to the apostles, or even the first christians, manifestly for the conviction and conversion of an infidel world? "These signs," says Christ, "shall follow them that believe: In my name, shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." Do we now expect such signs to follow upon our faith? And is not the promise of immediate inspiration on any emergency (which is doubtless a miraculous gift as well as those above enumerated) to be considered as of the same nature, and given for the same end? And ought not all these precepts, to which promises of this supernatural kind are annexed

as the reason, to be understood with the same restriction? When our Lord foretold his disciples, that they should be brought before kings and rulers for his name's sake, he adds, "Settle it in your hearts not to meditate before what you shall answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist." It is manifest the obligation of the precept can only be explained by a proper apprehension of the extent of the promise. But the truth is, that few or none, in these our days, would consider premeditation in such circumstances as either unlawful or improper. Who, even among those who inveigh most bitterly against the study of eloquence for the pulpit, does ever so much as pretend that we ought not to meditate, or so much as think, on any subject before we preach upon it? And yet the letter of the precept, nay and the spirit too, strikes more directly against particular premeditation, than against the general study of the art of speaking. It is more a particular application of the art, than the art itself that is here pointed at. And as to what the great apostle of the Gentiles hath said on this article, it will serve, I am persuaded, to every attentive reader, as a confirmation of what has been advanced above, in regard to the true meaning of such promises and precepts, and the limitations with which they ought to be understood. Well might he renounce every art which man's wisdom teacheth, whose speech was accompanied with the demonstration of the spirit and of power; that is, with those miraculous gifts, which were so admirably calculated to silence contradiction, and to convince the most incredulous. But the truth is, there is not one argument can be taken from those precepts

and examples, that will not equally conclude against all human learning whatsoever, as against the study of rhetoric. Because the apostles could preach to men of every nation without studying their language, in consequence of the gift of tongues with which they were supernaturally endowed, shall we think to convert strangers, with whose speech we are totally unacquainted, and not previously apply to grammars, and lexicons and other helps for attaining the language? Or because Paul, as he himself expressly tells us, received the knowledge of the gospel by immediate inspiration, shall we neglect the study of the scriptures and other outward means of instruction? There have been, I own, some enthusiasts who have carried the matter as far as this. And though hardly any person of the least reflection, would argue in such a manner now, it must be owned that the very same premises, by which any human art or institute in itself useful, is excluded, will equally answer the purposes of such fanatics in excluding all. And to the utility, and even importance of the rhetorical art, scripture itself bears testimony. Is it not mentioned by the sacred historian in recommendation of Apollos, that he was "an eloquent man," as well as mighty in the scriptures? And is not his success manifestly ascribed, under God, to these advantages? There is no mention of any supernatural gifts, which he could receive only by the imposition of the hands of an apostle; and it appears from the history, that before he had any interview with the apostles, immediately after his conversion, he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing from the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ. The very words used by the inspired penman are such as are

familiar with rhetoricians in relation to the forensic eloquence, Ευτονως γαρ τοις Ιωδαιοις διακατηλεγχε̃το, *Acriter, vehementer, magna contentione.* Now though it is not permitted to us to reach the celestial heights of a Peter or a Paul, I see nothing to hinder our aspiring to the humbler attainments of an Apollos. But enough, and perhaps too much, for obviating objections, which I cannot allow myself to think, will have great weight with gentlemen, who have been so long employed in the study of the learned languages, and of the liberal arts and sciences. However, when one hath occasion to hear such arguments (if indeed they deserve to be called so) advanced by others, it may be of some utility to be provided with an answer.

The next point, and which is of the greatest consequence, is, In what manner this art or talent may be attained, at least as much of it as is suited to the business of preaching, and is on moral and religious subjects best adapted to the ends of instruction and persuasion? When I gave you a general sketch of my plan, I observed on this article that in a great measure the talents required in the preacher are such as are necessary to him in common with every other public speaker, whatever be the scene of his appearances, whether it be his lot to deliver his orations in the senate, at the bar, or from the pulpit. Now what the preacher must have in common with those of so many other and very different professions, it cannot be expected that here we should treat particularly, especially when it is considered how many other things have a preferable title to our notice. What indeed is peculiar in the eloquence of the pulpit will deserve a more particular consideration. But though we do not from

this place propose to give an institute of rhetoric, it will not be improper to give some directions in relation to the theory of it, and particularly to the reading both of ancient and modern authors, whence the general knowledge of the subject, which is too much neglected by theological students, may be had. When we consider the nature of this elegant and useful art with any degree of attention, we shall soon be convinced, that it is a certain improvement on the arts of grammar, and logic; on which it founds, and without which it could have no existence. On the other hand, without this, these arts would lose much of their utility and end, for it is by the art of rhetoric, that we are enabled to make our knowledge in language, and skill in reasoning, turn to the best account for the instruction and persuasion of others. "The wise in heart," saith Solomon, "shall be called prudent, but the sweetness of the lips encreaseth learning*."

Now the best preparation for an orator, on whatever kind of theatre he shall be called to act, is to understand thoroughly the discursive art, and to be well acquainted with the words, structure, and idiom of the language which he is to employ. By skill in the former, I do not mean being well versed in the artificial dialectic of the schools, though this, I acknowledge, doth not want its use, but being conversant in the natural and genuine principles and grounds of reasoning, whether derived from sense or memory, from comparison of related ideas, from testimony, experience, or analogy. School logic, as was well observed by Mr. Locke, is much better calculated for the detection of

* See the Philosophy of Rhetoric, vol. i. book 1. ch. iv. Of the Relation which Eloquence bears to Logic and to Grammar.

sophistry than the discovery of truth. Its forms of argumentation in mood and figure carry too much artifice, not to say mechanism, in the very front of them, to suit the free and disengaged manner of the orator, in whom every thing ought to appear perfectly natural and easy, and nothing that looks like contrivance or insidious design. But though the logician's manner is not to be copied by the public speaker, his art will be of use, sometimes in furnishing topics of argument, often in suggesting hints to assist in refutation. But true logic, it must be acknowledged, is best studied not in a sholastic system, but in the writings of the most judicious and best reasoners on the various subjects supplied by history, science and philosophy. And with regard to language, as it is the English alone with which the preachers in this country, a very few excepted, are concerned as public speakers, they ought not only to study its structure and analogy in our best grammarians, but endeavour to familiarize themselves to its idiom, and to acquire a sufficient stock of words and a certain facility in using them, by an acquaintance with our best English authors. We have the greater need of this, as in this part of the island we labour under some special disadvantages, which, that our compositions may be more extensively useful, it is our duty to endeavour to surmount.

As to the rhetorical art itself, in this particular the moderns appear to me to have made hardly any advance or improvement upon the ancients. I can say, at least, of most of the performances in the way of institute, which I have had an opportunity of reading on this subject, either in French or English, every

thing valuable is servilely copied from Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, in whose writings, especially Quintilian's Institutions, and Cicero's books *de inventione*, those called *ad Herennium*, and his dialogues *De oratore*, every public speaker ought to be conversant. To these it will not be amiss to add Longinus on the sublime, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and some others. And as, in every art, the examples of eminent performers will be found to the full as instructive to the student, as the precepts laid down by the teacher, antiquity does here at least furnish us with the best models in the orations of Cicero in Latin, and in those of Æschines and Demosthenes in Greek. Of modern authors considered in both views, as teachers of the art, and as performers, I would recommend what Rollin and Fenelon have written on the subject, the sermons, and also the lectures on eloquence * lately published by the ingenious and truly eloquent Dr. Blair; to which give me leave to add the sermons of my amiable and much lamented friend Mr. Farquhar, which though no other than fragments, having been left unfinished by the author, who appears to have had no view to publication, and though consequently less correct in point of language, are on account of the justness of the sentiments, and the affecting warmth with which they are written, highly admired by persons of taste and discernment. †

* Dr. Campbell's Lectures on Pulpit Eloquence, were composed and delivered before the publication of Dr. Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric. The recommendation as above was added to the original manuscript after perusing the lectures of his friend Dr. Blair.

† Here the author introduced for his second lecture the tenth chapter of the first book of his Philosophy of Rhetoric, entitled "The different kinds of public speaking in use among the moderns, compared, with a view to their different advantages in respect of eloquence." In that chapter there are several things highly worthy of the attention of the preacher.

LECTURE II.

Of the Sentiment in Pulpit Discourses.

I AM now to consider the train of sentiment, the elocution, and the pronunciation, that are best adapted to the pulpit. Of these things I only mean at first to take a more general and cursory survey, and make such remarks on each, as will hold almost universally of all the instructions given from the pulpit, whatever the particular subject be. As to those which may suit the different sorts of sermons and other discourses to be employed by the preacher, I shall have occasion afterwards to take notice of them, when I come to inquire into the rules of composition, worthy the attention of the christian orator, and to mark out the different kinds, whereof this branch of eloquence is susceptible.

I begin at this time with what regards the sentiments. Let it be observed, that I here use the term sentiments in the greatest latitude for the sense or thoughts. I mean thereby what may be considered as the soul of the discourse, or all the instruction of whatever kind, that is intended to be conveyed by means of the expression into the minds of the hearers. Perhaps the import of the word will be more exactly ascertained by saying, it is that in any original performance, which

it behoves a translator to retain in his version into another language, whilst the expression is totally changed. Thus (to preserve the metaphor of soul and body already adopted) we may say, that a discourse in being translated undergoes a sort of transmigration. The same soul passes into a different body. For if the ideas, the sense, the information conveyed to the hearers or readers be not the same in the version, as in the original performance, the translation is not faithful. Now all that regards the soul or sense may be distributed into these four different forms of communication, namely, *narration*, *explanation*, *reasoning* and *moral reflection*. This last is sometimes by way of eminence called *sentiment*.

To the first of these, *narration*, there will be pretty frequent occasion of recourse, both for the illustration of any point of doctrine or portion of scripture wherewith the subject happens to be connected, and also for affecting the hearers in a way suitable to the particular aim of the discourse. And indeed it often happens, that nothing is better adapted to this end, than an apposite passage of history properly related. But what are the rules, it will be asked, by the due observance of which propriety in this matter may be attained? One of those most commonly recommended is to be brief. But this rule needs explanation, as there is nothing we ought more carefully to avoid than a cold uninteresting conciseness, which is sometimes the consequence of an excessive desire of brevity. Brevity in relating, as in every thing else, is only so far commendable, as it is rendered compatible with answering all the ends of the relation. Where these are not answered, through an affectation of being very nervous

and laconic, comprehending much in little, the narration ought not to be styled brief, but defective. In strictness, the relation ought to contain enough, and neither more nor less. But what is enough? That can be determined only by a proper attention to the end for which the narration was introduced. A narrative may contain enough to render the story and its connection intelligible to the hearer, yet not enough to fix his attention and engage his heart, and may therefore be justly chargeable with a faulty conciseness. But if this extreme ought to be carefully guarded against, it well deserves your notice, that the contrary, and no less dangerous, extreme of prolixity, by entering into a detail too minute and circumstantial, ought with equal care to be avoided. If, in consequence of the first error, the hearer's mind remains unsatisfied, in consequence of the second, it is cloyed. Both faults can be avoided only by such a judicious selection of circumstances, as at once excludes nothing essential to the purposes of perspicuity and connection, or conducive to the principal scope of the narration, and includes nothing, that in the respects aforesaid can be deemed superfluous. Such is every circumstance that can be denominated remote, trivial, or necessarily implied in the other circumstances mentioned. But to assist the preacher in conducting such narratives, when pertinent, nothing will serve so well for a model, as the historical part of sacred writ. No where else will he find such simplicity, as brings what is said to the level of the meanest capacity, united with such dignity, as is sufficient to engage the attention of the highest. Passages of scripture-history, when they happen to coincide with the speaker's view, are much preferable to those

which may be taken from any other source; and that on a double account. First, it may be supposed, that not only all the serious part, but even the much greater part of the audience, being better acquainted with these, will both more readily perceive and more strongly feel the application which the preacher makes of them; and secondly, the authority of holy writ gives an additional weight to that which is the intent of the narrative. I do not say however, that a preacher, in quoting instances, examples and authorities, ought to confine himself entirely to the sacred history. Our blessed Lord, though addressing himself only to Jews, did not hesitate to lay the foundation of some of his parables in those customs, which had arisen solely from their intercourse with the Romans. Of this the parable you have Luke xix. 12, &c. of the nobleman who travelled into a distant land, in order that he might obtain the royal power, and return king over his countrymen, is an evident instance. Such was become the general practice in all the provinces and states dependant upon Rome. The royalty was often not to be attained without applications to the Roman senate; and these were often thwarted, as in the parable, by counter applications, either from the people, or from some rival for power. Nay, there is very probably in that parable an allusion to some things, which had actually happened in regard to the succession of Archelaus, son of Herod king of Judea, with which many of his hearers could not fail to be acquainted, the thing having happened but recently and in their own time. Nor was the apostle Paul at all scrupulous in illustrating the sublimest truths of the gospel, by the exercises and diversions which obtained at that time among the ido-

latrous Greeks. But even in those cases wherein scripture doth not furnish the facts, it supplies us with an excellent pattern of a natural, simple and interesting manner in which the relation ought to be conducted. I shall only add on this article that the different circumstances ought to be so fitly and so naturally connected, that those which precede may easily introduce those which follow, and those which follow may appear necessarily to arise out of those which precede. This, by adding to the credibility and verisimilitude, greatly increases the effect of the whole. I shall not at this time say any thing of those qualities which more regard the expression than the thought, as there will be scope for this afterwards.

The second thing comprised under the term thought, or sentiment, was *explication*, in which I include also description and definition. And on this, the rules laid down upon the former article will equally hold good. The same care and attention will be requisite, both in culling and disposing the particulars, that the whole may be neither tedious nor unsatisfactory. In regard to disposition and arrangement, there is rather more art necessary in this case than in the former. In the former, to wit, narrative, all the material circumstances are successive, and the order of introducing them must in a great measure be determined by the order of time. But in explication, they are simultaneous, and therefore require the exercise of judgment and reflection, in assigning to each its proper place and order in the discourse. Need it be added, that in all descriptive enumerations particular care ought to be taken, tha nothing foreign be comprehended, and that nothing which properly belongs to the subject be omitted.

The logical rules in regard to definition are sufficiently known, and therefore shall not here be repeated. On the whole, in regard to both the preceding articles, a certain justness of apprehension is of all things the most important in a speaker. If he has not a clear conception of the matter himself, it can never be expected, he should convey it to others.

The third thing mentioned as belonging to the thought was *reasoning*. When it is considered, what a mixed society a christian assembly for the most part is, and how little the far greater number, even of what are called the politest congregations, is accustomed to the exercise of the discursive faculty, it will be evident that any thing in the way of argument would need to be extremely simple, consisting of but a very few steps, and extremely clear, having nothing in it that is of an abstract nature, and so not easily comprehended by them, and nothing that alludes to facts which do not fall within ordinary observation. If the argument is not deduced from experience, or the common principles of the understanding, but from the import of the words of scripture, one would need to be particularly distinct in setting the sacred text before them, avoiding as much as possible, every thing that savours of subtlety, conceit or learned criticism. Something indeed of criticism, when the point to be proved, is a point merely of revelation, cannot always be avoided. In general, however, we are warranted to say, it ought to be avoided as much as possible. The passages of holy writ, therefore, which you make choice of, in support of your doctrine, ought to be always the plainest and the most direct. Though you should perhaps find other passages, in which, to a man of letters, there

might appear equal or even stronger evidence, yet if such passages would require a commentary or elaborate disquisition to elucidate them, they are not so convincing to the people, and should, therefore, be let alone. It may not be improper here, however, before we dismiss this article, to examine a little what the occasions are which require reasoning from the pulpit, and what are the different topics of argument adapted to the different natures of the subject. These last are very properly divided into practical and speculative. In the former, the preacher argues to inforce the practice of a duty recommended by him; in the latter, to gain the belief of his hearers to a tenet he thinks fit to defend. In the former case, it is his aim to evince the beauty, the propriety, the equity, the pleasantness or the utility of such a conduct both for time and for eternity. His topics therefore are all drawn from common life and experience, from the common sense of mankind and the most explicit declarations of holy writ, topics in a great measure the same with those on which men of all conditions are wont to argue with one another, in regard to what is right and prudent in the management of their ordinary secular affairs. Such were the topics, to which our Lord himself had recourse in his parables, always illustrating the reasons and motives which ought to influence in the things of eternity, by the reasons and motives which do commonly influence us in the things of time. Such topics are consequently, if properly conducted, level to the capacities of all. Whereas in the latter case, when the subject is of doctrinal points or points of speculation, the resources of the preacher are extremely different. His reasoning must then be drawn from the essential na-

tures and differences of things, and the comparison of abstract qualities, or perhaps from abstruse and critical disquisitions on the import of some dark and controverted passages of scripture, which, it must be owned, are beyond the sphere of the illiterate. I would not by this be understood to mean, that controversy should never be admitted into the pulpit. We are exhorted by the apostle Jude "earnestly to contend for the faith, which was once delivered to the saints." And Paul in his epistles hath given us an excellent example of this laudable zeal in support of the fundamental doctrines of our religion, against those who denied or doubted them. This he shews, as on several other occasions, so in particular in the defence of the doctrine of the resurrection, and in opposition to that false dogma of the Judaizing teachers of his time, that the observance of circumcision and of the other ceremonies of the law is necessary to salvation. And indeed from the reason of the thing it is manifest, that in a religious institution founded on certain important truths or principles, through the belief of which only it can operate on the hearts and influence the lives of men, it must be of the utmost consequence to refute the contrary errors, when they appear to be creeping in or gaining ground among the people. But before the preacher attempt a refutation of this kind, there are two things he ought impartially and carefully to inquire into. First, he ought to inquire, whether the tenet he means to support be one of the great truths of religion or not. It may be a prevalent opinion, it may have a reference to the common salvation, nay more, it may be a true opinion, and yet no article of the faith which was once delivered to the saints. These articles are neither

numerous nor abstruse. We cannot say so much in regard to the comments and glosses of men. Yet it is an undoubted fact, that where the former have excited one controversy in the church, the latter have produced fifty. It must therefore be of importance to him, to be well assured that he is vindicating the great oracles of unerring wisdom, and not the precarious interpretations and glosses of fallible men; that he acts the part of the genuine disciple of Christ, and not the blind follower of a merely human guide. In the former case only, he defends the cause of christianity; in the latter, he but supports the interest of a sect or faction. In that, he contends for the faith; in this, "he dotes about questions and strifes of words, vain janglings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and involving himself in oppositions of science falsely so called." And that under this last class, the far greater part of our theological disputes are comprehended, even such as have been too often and too hotly agitated in the pulpit, is not to be denied. Such in particular are a great many of the doctrinal controversies, which different parties of protestants have with one another. They may with great propriety be styled λογομαχιαι, an emphatic term of the apostle Paul; for they are not only wars with words, but wars merely about words and phrases, where there is no discernible, or at least, no material difference in the sense; and which, agreeably to the character he gives of them, "gender strifes, and minister idle disputes rather than godly edifying." The second thing which the preacher ought to inquire into, before he engage in preaching controversy, is whether the false doctrine he means to refute has any number of partizans amongst his

hearers; or whether there be any immediate danger of their being seduced to that opinion. If otherwise, the introduction of such questions might possibly raise doubts where formerly there were none, and at any rate, unless managed with uncommon prudence and temper, have rather a tendency that is unfavourable to the christian spirit, and in narrow minds is apt to beget a sort of bitterness and uncharitableness, which these dignify in themselves with the name of zeal, though in their adversaries they can clearly see its malignity. At the same time, that I give these caveats against the abuse, I by no means deny the occasional expediency and use of controversy.

As to the fourth and last species of thought mentioned, *moral reflection*, or what is sometimes peculiarly denominated sentiment; there is much less hazard that in this we should exceed. Here the preacher (if he is at all judicious in his choice) runs less risk of either growing tiresome to the more improved part of his audience, or unintelligible to those whose understandings have not been cultivated. In the former, the rational powers are addressed; in this, the heart and the conscience. Indeed, I am far from thinking, that these two kinds of addresses may not often be happily blended together; particularly, when the subject relates to moral conduct, an address of the latter kind, if interwoven with a plain narrative, will frequently prove the most effectual means of removing unfavourable prepossessions, engaging affection as well as satisfying reason and bringing her to be of the same party. It was a method often and successfully employed by our blessed Lord, when attacked by Jewish bigotry, on the extent that ought to be given to the love of our neigh-

bour. The maxims of the Pharisees, like those of all bigots, of every age, nation and profession, were very illiberal, and measuring the goodness of the universal father, by their own contracted span, could not bear to think that those of a different nation, and still more those who differed in religious matters, could be comprehended under it. When attacked by these narrow hearted zealots, in what manner, I pray you, doth he silence contradiction, and gain every susceptible heart over to his side? Not by subtle ratiocination on the beauty of virtue, or on the eternal and unalterable fitness of things; but by a simple story, by the parable of the compassionate Samaritan, in the conclusion of which he shows, that, even their own consciences being judges, to act agreeably to the more extensive explanation of the duty, was the more amiable part, and consequently more worthy of their esteem and imitation. Again, when he would show, that even the profligate are not to be abandoned to despair, with what an amazing superiority doth he subdue the most unrelenting pharisaic pride by the parable of the prodigal? Who ever could so quickly dissipate the thickest clouds raised by inveterate prejudices and party-spirit, and render the only unequivocal standard of moral truth, the characters of the divine law engraven on the human heart, to all who are not wilfully blind, distinctly legible? Could any the most acute and elaborate dissertation on moral rectitude, or the essential qualities and relations of things, have produced half the effect, even in point of conviction, as well as of feeling? How different his method from that of the ancient sophists? But not more different than their aims. Their aim was to make men talk fluently and plausi-

bly on every subject: his, to make them think justly, and act uprightly.

So much shall suffice for what regards the sentiments or thoughts in general, that are adapted to the eloquence of the pulpit, whether narration, explanation, reasoning, or moral reflection. On this head, we were under a necessity of being briefer and more general, as it is here that a man's natural talents, genius, taste, and judgment have the greatest sway; and where nature has denied these talents, it is in vain to imagine that the defect can ever be supplied by art. Whereas the principal scope for the exertions of art and education is in what regards language, composition and arrangement. It is principally in what regards the thought, that we may say universally, whatever be the species of eloquence a man aims to attain, every thing that serves to improve his knowledge, discernment and good sense, serves also to improve him as an orator. "Scribendi recte sapere est et principium et fons."

LECTURE III.

Of the Expression.

In my last lecture, I treated in general of the thought or sentiment of the discourse, and laid before you some reflections on the different sorts into which it is distinguishable, narration, explanation, argumentation and moral reflection, and the methods whereby each ought to be conducted by the christian orator. I proceed now to consider what is properly called elocution, or what regards the expression or enunciation of the sentiments by language. The word has sometimes of late been less properly used for pronunciation. Let it be observed, that I here always mean by it, all that regards the enunciation of the thoughts by language. It is by this, as I had occasion in a former discourse to remark to you, that eloquence holds of grammar, as it is by the other, that she holds of logic.

A few words therefore on what I may call the grammatical elocution, before I enter on the consideration of the rhetorical. The work of the grammarian serves as a foundation to that of the rhetorician. The highest aim of the former is the lowest aim of the latter. The one seeks only purity, the other superadds elegance and energy. Grammatical purity in any language

(suppose English, that in which every preacher in this country is chiefly interested) requires a careful observance of these three things; first, that the words employed be English words; secondly, that they be construed in the English idiom; thirdly, that they be made to present to the reader or hearer the precise meaning, which good use hath affixed to them. A trespass against the first, when the word is not English, is called a barbarism; a trespass against the second, when the fault lies in the construction, is termed a solecism; a trespass against the third, when the word, though English, is not used in its true meaning, is denominated an impropriety. As the foundation is necessary to the superstructure, so an attention to grammatical purity is previously necessary to one who would attain the elegant, affecting, and energetic expression of the orator. There is the greater need of attending to this particular here, as we, in this country, labour under special disadvantages in this respect. Permit me, therefore, to take this opportunity of recommending to you, to bestow some time and attention on the perusal of our best English grammars, and to familiarize yourselves to the idiom of our best and purest writers. It is, I think, a matter of some consequence, and therefore ought not to be altogether neglected by the student.

I know it will be said, that when all a man's labour is employed in instructing the people of a country parish, to which there is little or no resort of strangers, propriety of expression is not a matter of mighty moment, provided he speak in such a manner as to be intelligible to his parishioners. I admit the truth of what is advanced in this objection, but by no means the consequence which the objectors seem disposed

to draw from it. I must therefore entreat that a few things may be considered on the other hand. And first, you cannot know for certain, where it may please Providence that your lot should be. If you acquire the knowledge of the language in the proper acceptation of the word, you acquire a dialect which will make you understood over all the British empire; for as the English translation of the Bible, which is universally used in these dominions, and as all our best writings, are in what I may call the general and pure idiom of the tongue, that idiom is perfectly well understood even by those, who cannot speak it with propriety themselves. Whereas if you attach yourself to a provincial dialect, it is a hundred to one, that many of your words and phrases will be misunderstood in the very neighbouring province, district or county. And even though they should be intelligible enough, they have a coarseness and vulgarity in them, that cannot fail to make them appear to men of knowledge and taste ridiculous: and this doth inexpressible injury to the thought conveyed under them, how just and important soever it be. You will say, that this is all the effect of mere prejudice in the hearers, consequently unreasonable and not to be regarded. Be it, that this is prejudice in the hearers, and therefore unreasonable. It doth not follow, that the speaker ought to pay no regard to it. It is the business of the orator to accommodate himself to men, such as he sees they are, and not such as he imagines they should be. A certain pliancy of disposition in regard to innocent prejudices and defects, is what in our intercourse with the world, good sense necessarily requires of us, candour requires of us, our religion itself requires of us. It is this very

disposition, which our great apostle recommends by his own example, where he tells us that he "became all things to all men, that he might by all means save some." But upon impartial examination, the thing perhaps will be found not so unreasonable, as at first sight it may appear. A man of merit and breeding you may disguise by putting him in the apparel of a clown, but you cannot justly find fault, that in that garb he meets not with the same reception in good company, that he would meet with if more suitably habited. The outward appearance is the first thing that strikes us in a person, the expression is the first thing that strikes us in a discourse. Take care at least, that in neither, there be any thing to make an unfavourable impression, which may preclude all further inquiry and regard. It was extremely well said by a very popular preacher in our own days, who when consulted by a friend that had a mind to publish, whether he thought it befitting a writer on religion to attend to such little matters as grammatical correctness; answered, "By all means. It is much better to write so as to make a critic turn Christian, than so as to make a Christian turn critic." The answer was judicious and well expressed. That the thought may enter deeply into the mind of the reader or hearer, there is need of all the assistance possible from the expression. Little progress can it be expected then, that the former shall make, if there be any thing in the latter, which serves to divert the attention from it. And this effect at least of diverting the attention, even mere grammatic blunders, with those who are capable of discerning them, are but too apt to produce. Besides, from the greater intercourse we have now with England, it is manifest, that their idiom and pronuncia-

tion are daily gaining ground amongst us. In consequence of this, more will be expected than formerly from a public speaker, who in every improvement in regard to language, which so nearly concerns his own department, ought to be among the first, rather than among the last. But this only by the way.

The more immediate object with us is rhetorical not grammatical elocution, and only that kind of the former which is specially adapted to the christian oratory. For though there be not perhaps any qualities requisite here, which may not with good effect be employed by those whose province it is to harangue from the bar or in the senate, and though there be very few of the qualities of elocution, which may not on some occasions, with great propriety, be employed from the pulpit; yet some of them, without all question, are more essential to one species of oratory than to another, and it is such as are most adapted to the discourses with which we are here concerned, that I propose now particularly to consider. Before all things then, in my judgment, the preacher ought to make it his study that the style of his discourses be both perspicuous, and affecting. I shall make a few observations to illustrate each of these particulars, and then conclude this lecture.

First, I say, his style ought to be *perspicuous*. Though it is indeed a most certain fact, that perspicuity is of the utmost consequence to every orator (for what valuable end can any oration answer, which is not understood?) this quality doubtless ought to be more a study to the christian orator than to any other whatever. The reason is obvious. The more we are in danger of violating any rule, (especially if it be

a rule of the last importance,) the more circumspection we ought to employ in order to avoid that danger. Now that the preacher must be in much greater danger in this respect than any other public speaker, is manifest from the mixed character at best, often from the very low character in respect of acquired knowledge, of the audience to whom his speech is addressed. Perspicuity is in a great measure a relative quality. A speech may be perspicuous to one, which to another is unintelligible. It is possible indeed to be obscure in pleading before the most learned and discerning judges, because the pleader's style may be remarkably perplexed and intricate; but without any perplexity or intricacy of style, it is even more than possible, that a man of reading and education shall speak obscurely when he addresses himself in a set discourse to simple and illiterate people. There is a cause of darkness in this case, totally independant of the grammatical structure of the sentences, and the general character of the style. It is, besides, of all causes of obscurity, that which is most apt to escape the notice of a speaker. Nothing is more natural than for a man to imagine, that what is intelligible to him is so to every body, or at least that he speaks with sufficient clearness, when he uses the same language and in equal plainness, with that in which he hath studied the subject, and been accustomed to read. But however safe this rule of judging may be in the barrister and the senator, who generally address their discourses to men of similar education with themselves, and of equal or nearly equal abilities and learning, it is by no means a proper rule for the preacher, one destined to be in spiritual matters, a guide to the blind, a light to them who are in dark-

ness, an instructer of the foolish, and a teacher of babes. Therefore, besides the ordinary rules of perspicuity in respect of diction, which in common with every other public speaker he ought to attend to, he must advert to this in particular, that the terms and phrases he employs in his discourse be not beyond the reach of the inferior ranks of people. Otherwise his preaching is, to the bulk of his audience, but beating the air; whatever the discourse may be in itself, the speaker is to them no better than a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. It is reported of Archbishop Tillotson, that he was wont, before preaching his sermons to read them privately to an illiterate old woman of plain sense, who lived in the house with him, and wherever he found he had employed any word or expression, that she did not understand, he instantly erased it, and substituted a plainer in its place, till he brought the style down to her level. The story is much to the prelate's honour; for however incompetent such judges might be, of the composition, the doctrine or the argument, they are certainly the most competent judges of what terms and phrases fall within the apprehension of the vulgar, the class to which they belong. But though such an expedient would not answer in every situation, we ought at least to supply the want of it, by making it more an object of attention than is commonly done, to discover what in point of language falls within and what without the sphere of the common people.

Before I dismiss this article of perspicuity, I shall mention briefly a few of those faults, by which it is most commonly transgressed.

The first is pedantry, or an ostentation of learning, by frequent recourse to those words and phrases which

are called technical, and which are in use only among the learned. This may justly be denominated the worst kind of obscurity, because it is always an intentional obscurity. In other cases a man may speak obscurely, without knowing it; he may on some subjects speak obscurely, and though he suspects it, may not have it in his power to remedy it; but the pedant affects obscurity. He is dark of purpose, that you may think him deep. The character of a profound scholar is his primary object. Commonly indeed he overshoots the mark, and with all persons of discernment loses this character by his excessive solicitude to acquire it. The pedant in literature is perfectly analogous to the hypocrite in religion. As appearance and not reality is the great study of each, both in mere exteriors far outdo the truly learned and the pious, with whom the reputation of learning and piety is but a secondary object at the most. The shallowness however of such pretenders rarely escapes the discovery of the judicious. But if falsehood and vanity are justly accounted mean and despicable, wherever they are found; when they dare to show themselves in the pulpit, a place consecrated to truth and purity, they must appear to every ingenuous mind perfectly detestable. It must be owned however, that the pedantic style is not now so prevalent in preaching, as it hath been in former times, and therefore needs not to be further enlarged on. There is indeed a sort of literary diction, which sometimes the inexperienced are ready to fall into insensibly, from their having been much more accustomed to the school and to the closet, to the works of some particular schemer in philosophy, than to the scenes of real life and conversation. This fault,

though akin to the former, is not so bad, as it may be without affectation, and when there is no special design of catching applause. It is indeed most commonly the consequence of an immoderate attachment to some one or other of the various systems of ethics or theology that have in modern times been published, and obtained a vogue among their respective partisans. Thus the zealous disciple of Shaftesbury, Akenside and Hutcheson is no sooner licensed to preach the gospel, than with the best intentions in the world, he harangues the people from the pulpit on the moral sense and universal benevolence, he sets them to inquire whether there be a perfect conformity in their affections to the supreme symmetry established in the universe, he is full of the sublime and beautiful in things, the moral objects of right and wrong, and the proportionable affection of a rationable creature towards them. He speaks much of the inward music of the mind, the harmony and the dissonance of the passions, and seems, by his way of talking, to imagine, that if a man have this same moral sense, which he considers as the mental ear, in due perfection, he may tune his soul with as much ease, as a musician tunes a musical instrument. The disciple of Doctor Clarke, on the contrary, talks to us in somewhat of a soberer strain, and less pompous phrase, but not a jot more edifying, about unalterable reason and the eternal fitness of things, about the conformity of our actions to their immutable relations and essential differences. All the various sects or parties in religion have been often accused of using a peculiar dialect of their own, when speaking on religious subjects, which though familiar to the votaries of the party, appears extremely uncouth to others.

The charge, I am sensible, is not without foundation, though all parties are not in this respect equally guilty. We see however that the different systems of philosophy, especially that branch which comes under the denomination of pneumatology, are equally liable to this imputation with systems of theology. I would not be understood, from any thing I have said, to condemn in the gross either the books or systems alluded to. They have their excellences as well as their blemishes; and as to many of the points in which they seem to differ from one another, I am satisfied that the difference is, like some of our theological disputes, more verbal than real. Let us read even on opposite sides, but still so as to preserve the freedom of our judgment in comparing, weighing and deciding, so that we can with justice apply to ourselves, in regard to all human teachers, the declaration of the poet,

Nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri.

And even in some cases, wherein we approve the thought in any of those authors, it may not be proper to adopt the language. The adage, which enjoins us to think with the learned, but speak with the vulgar, is not to be understood as enjoining us to dissemble; but not to make a useless parade of learning, particularly to avoid every thing in point of language which would put the sentiments we mean to convey beyond the reach of those with whom we converse. It was but just now admitted, that the different sects or denominations of christians had their several and peculiar dialects. I would advise the young divine, in forming his style in sacred matters, to avoid as much as possible the peculiarities of each. The language of holy

scripture and of common sense afford him a sufficient standard. And with regard to the distinguishing phrases, which our factions in religion have introduced, though these sometimes may appear to superficial people and half thinkers sufficiently perspicuous, the appearance is a mere illusion. The generality of men, little accustomed to reflection, are so constituted, that what their ears have been long familiarized to, however obscure in itself or unmeaning it be, seems perfectly plain to them. They are well acquainted with the terms, expressions and customary application, and they look no farther. A great deal of the learning in divinity of such of our common people as think themselves, and are sometimes thought by others, wonderful scholars, is of this sort. It is generally the fruit of much application, strong memory and weak judgment, and consisting mostly of mere words and phrases, is of that kind of knowledge which puffeth up, gendereth self-conceit, that species of it in particular known by the name of spiritual pride, captiousness, censoriousness, jealousy, malignity, but by no means ministreth to the edifying of the hearers in love. This sort of knowledge I denominate learned ignorance, of all sorts of ignorance the most difficult to be surmounted, agreeably to the observation of Solomon, "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit, there is more hope of a fool than of him." Would you avoid then feeding the vanity of your hearers, supplying them with words instead of sense, amusing them with curious questions and verbal controversies, instead of furnishing them with useful and practical instruction, detach yourselves from the artificial, ostentatious phraseology of every scholastic, or system-builder in theology, and keep as

close as possible to the pure style of holy writ, which the apostle calls "the sincere or unadulterated milk of the word." The things, which the Holy Spirit hath taught by the prophets and apostles, give not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but in the words which the Holy Spirit teacheth, a much more natural and suitable language. But be particularly attentive that the scripture expressions employed be both plain and apposite. The word of God itself may be, and often is handled unskilfully. Would the preacher carefully avoid this charge, let him first be sure that he hath himself a distinct meaning to every thing he advanceth, and next examine, whether the expression he intends to use be a clear and adequate enunciation of that meaning. For if it is true, that a speaker is sometimes not understood, because he doth not express his meaning with sufficient clearness, it is also true that sometimes he is not understood, because he hath no meaning to express. The last advice I would give on the head of perspicuity is, in composing, to aim at a certain simplicity in the structure of your sentences, avoiding long, intricate and complex periods. Remember always that the bulk of the people are unused to reading and study. They lose sight of the connection in very long sentences, and they are quite bewildered, when, for the sake of rounding a period, and suspending the sense till the concluding clause, you transgress the customary arrangement of the words. The nearer therefore your diction comes to the language of conversation, it will be the more familiar to them, and so the more easily apprehended. In this too the style of scripture is an excellent model. So much for perspicuity.

The next quality I mentioned in the style, was, that it be *affecting*. Though this has more particularly a place in those discourses, which admit and even require a good deal of the pathetic, yet, in a certain degree, it ought to accompany every thing that comes from the pulpit. All from that quarter is conceived to be, mediately or immediately, connected with the most important interests of mankind. This gives a propriety to the affecting manner in a certain degree, whatever be the particular subject. It is this quality in preaching, to which the French critics have given the name of *onction*, and which they explain to be, an affecting sweetness of manner which engages the heart. It is indeed that warmth, and gentle emotion in the address and language, which serves to show, that the speaker is much in earnest in what he says, and is actuated to say it from the tenderest concern for the welfare of his hearers. As this character however can be considered only as a degree of that which comes under the general denomination of pathetic, we shall have occasion to consider it more fully afterwards. It is enough here to observe, that as the general strain of pulpit elocution ought to be seasoned with this quality, this doth necessarily imply, that the language be ever grave and serious. The necessity of this results from the consideration of the very momentous effect which preaching was intended to produce; as the necessity of perspicuity, the first quality mentioned, results from the consideration of the character sustained by the hearers. That the effect designed by this institution, namely the reformation of mankind, requires a certain seriousness, which though occasionally requisite in other public speakers, ought uniformly to be preserved by the

preacher, is a truth that will scarcely be doubted by any person who reflects. This may be said in some respect to narrow his compass in persuasion, as it will not permit the same free recourse to humour, wit and ridicule, which often prove powerful auxiliaries to other orators at the bar and in the senate, agreeably to the observation of the poet,

Ridiculum acri
Fortius et melius magnas plerumque secat res.

At the same time, I am very sensible that an air of ridicule in disproving or dissuading, by rendering opinions or practices contemptible, hath been attempted with approbation by preachers of great name. I can only say that when the contemptuous manner is employed (which ought to be very seldom) it requires to be managed with the greatest delicacy. For time and place and occupation seem all incompatible with the levity of ridicule; they render jesting impertinence, and laughter madness. Therefore any thing from the pulpit, which might provoke this emotion, would now be justly deemed an unpardonable offence against both piety and decorum. In order however to prevent mistakes, permit me here, in passing, to make a remark that may be called a digression, as it immediately concerns my own province only. The remark is, that in these prelections, I do not consider myself as limited by the laws of preaching. There is a difference between a school, even a theological school and a church, a professor's chair and a pulpit; there is a difference between graduates in philosophy and the arts, and a common congregation. And though in some things, not in all, there be a coincidence in the subject, yet the object is different. In the former, it is purely

the information of the hearers, in the latter, it is ultimately their reformation. I shall not therefore hesitate, in this place, to borrow aid from whatever may serve innocently to illustrate, enliven or enforce any part of my subject, and keep awake the attention of my hearers, which is but too apt to flag at hearing the most rational discourse, if there be nothing in it, which can either move the passions, or please the imagination. The nature of my department excludes almost every thing of the former kind, or what may be called pathetic. A little of the *onction* above explained is the utmost that here ought to be aspired to. There is the less need to dispense with what of the latter kind may be helpful for rousing attention. I hope therefore to be indulged the liberty, a liberty which I shall use very sparingly, of availing myself of the plea of the satirist,

Ridentem dicere verum
Quid vetat?

So much for the perspicuous and the affecting manner, qualities in the style which ought particularly to predominate in all discourses from the pulpit. There are other graces of elocution, which may occasionally find a place there, such as the nervous, the elegant, and some others, but the former ought never to be wanting. The former therefore are characteristic qualities. The latter are so far from being such, that sometimes they are rather of an opposite tendency. The nervous style requires a conciseness, that is often unfriendly to that perfect perspicuity which ought to predominate in all that is addressed to the christian people, and which leads a speaker rather to be diffuse in his expression, that he may the better adapt himself to ordinary capa-

cities. Elegance too demands a certain polish, that is not always entirely compatible with that artless simplicity, with which when the great truths of religion are adorned, they appear always to the most advantage, and in the truest majesty. They are "when unadorn'd, adorn'd the most."

We have now done with what regards in general the sentiment and the elocution. The next lecture shall be on the pronunciation.

LECTURE IV.

Of Pronunciation.

I HAVE in the two preceding discourses finished what regards in general the sentiments and the elocution proper for the pulpit; I intend in the present discourse to discuss the article of pronunciation. This admits the same division, which was observed in the former branch, into grammatical and rhetorical. The former was by the Greeks denominated *εκφωνησις*, the latter *υποκρισις*. As it is of the utmost consequence, when we are entering on the examination of any article, that we form precise ideas of the subject of inquiry, and do not confound things in themselves distinct, I shall begin this lecture with a definition of each of these, to which I must beg leave to entreat your attention, that so none may be at a loss about the meaning or application of what shall be advanced in the sequel. As to the first then, *grammatical pronunciation* consisteth in articulating, audibly and distinctly, the letters, whether vowels or consonants, assigning to each its appropriated sound, in giving the several syllables their just quantity, and in placing the accent, or, as some call it, the syllabic emphasis, in every word on the proper syllable. As to the second, *rhetorical pro-*

nunciation consisteth in giving such an utterance to the several words in a sentence, as shows in the mind of the speaker a strong perception, or, as it were, feeling of the truth and justness of the thought conveyed by them, and in placing the rhetorical emphasis in every sentence, on the proper word, that is, on that word which, by being pronounced emphatically, gives the greatest energy and clearness to the expression. Under this head is also comprehended *gesture;* as both imply a kind of natural expression, superadded to that conveyed by artificial signs, or the words of the language. Under the term gesture, I would be understood to comprehend not only the action of the eyes and other features of the countenance, but also that which results from the motion of the hands and carriage of the body. This together with the proper management of the voice was all comprised under the Greek word ὑποκρισις, borrowed from the theatre, but which, for want of a term of equal extent in our language, we are forced to include under the name pronunciation. Now these two kinds of pronunciation, the grammatical and the rhetorical, are so perfectly distinct, that each may be found in a very eminent degree without the other. The first indeed is merely an effect of education; in so much that one who has had the good fortune to be brought up in a place where the language is spoken in purity, and has been taught to read by a sufficient teacher, must inevitably, if he labours under no natural defect in the organs of speech, be master of grammatical pronunciation. The second is more properly, in its origin, the production of nature, but is capable of being considerably improved and polished by education. The natural qualities which combine in produc-

ing it, are an exquisite sensibility joined with a good ear and a flexible voice. An Englishman, who hath been properly educated, and always in good company, as the phrase is, that is, in the company of those who, by a kind of tacit consent, are allowed to take the lead in language, may pronounce so as to defy the censure of the most critical grammarian, and yet be, in the judgment of the rhetorician, a most languid and inanimate speaker, one who knows nothing at all of the oratorical pronunciation. Speakers you will often find in the house of commons, who are perfect in the one and totally deficient in the other. On the other hand, you will find speakers of this country who in respect of the last, have considerable talents, insomuch that they can excite and fix attention, that they can both please and move, that their voice seems capable alike of being modulated to sooth the passions or to inflame them, yet in whose pronunciation a grammarian may discover innumerable defects. There is this difference, however, between the two cases, that though the grammatical pronunciation may be perfect in its kind without the rhetorical, the last is never in perfection without the first. The art of the grammarian in this, as in the former article of elocution, serves as a foundation to that of the orator. It will be proper therefore to begin with a few remarks upon the former.

That a right grammatical pronunciation will deserve some regard from us, appears from the same reasons, which evinced that grammatical elocution deserves some regard. Those reasons therefore shall not be now repeated. There is however, it must be acknowledged, a considerable difference between the two cases. And the former attempt is much more hazardous than

the latter. If we aim no higher, than that the words we use, the application and the construction be proper English (which is all that grammatical elocution requires) we shall never run the risk of the charge of affectation, than which, I know no imputation that is more prejudicial to the orator. Whereas a forced and unnatural, because unaccustomed pronunciation, and the awkward mouthing which the attempt often occasions, as it falls within the observation of the generality of hearers, so it is more disgusting to hearers of taste and discernment, than perhaps any provincial accent whatsoever. Shall we then give up all attempts this way? I do not say that neither. But let us keep a proper medium in our attempts, and never strain beyond what we can effect with ease. Let us begin by avoiding the most faulty pronunciations we can discover in ourselves, or which have been remarked to us by others; and let us endeavour to avoid them not in the pulpit only, but in common conversation. It would be a matter of considerable consequence for this, as well as for more material purposes, that young men of an ingenuous temper and good sense, who happen to be companions, should mutually agree to serve as checks and monitors to one another. I know not any thing which would contribute more to prevent the contracting of ungainly habits, or to correct them timely when contracted. "A friend's eye," says the proverb, "is a good mirrour." And every one must be sensible, that there are several kinds of faults and improprieties, which totally elude the discovery of the person chargeable with them, but which by no means escape the notice of the attentive spectator or auditor. I said that when a faulty manner in pronounc-

ing is discovered, it ought to be avoided not in the pulpit only, but in conversation. The nearer our manner of pronouncing in the pulpit is to that we daily use, the more easy and the more natural it will appear. Example, as in every thing, so here in particular, goes a great way. Let us therefore attend to the manner of the best speakers, to whose company we have access, and we shall insensibly conform ourselves to it. It is by such insensible, more than by any intentional imitation, that every man acquires the speech and pronunciation which he uses. And by the like easy and gradual influence of example, by which a faulty pronunciation was contracted, it will best be cured. The only caution necessary on this article is, that we be very sure as to the choice we make of patterns, lest unluckily we imitate blemishes for excellences, and be at great pains in acquiring, what we ought rather to be at pains to avoid. Grammars and dictionaries may be of some use here, but are not sufficient without other aid. Distinctions only discernible by the ear, can never be adequately conveyed merely by the eye. There is one part of pronunciation, however, and a very important part, which may be learnt solely by book, that is, the placing of the accent or syllabic emphasis. In this, our provincial pronunciation often greatly misleads us. Nor have we any idea, how offensive a deviation of this kind is to the ears of an Englishman. So much for grammatical pronunciation.

As to the *rhetorical pronunciation*, there is not any thing so peculiar in the christian eloquence, as to require that we make any addition of moment to the rules on this subject laid down in the best institutes of rhetoric, which I recommend to your serious perusal.

I shall only remark to you a few of the chief and most common faults in this way, observable in preachers, and suggest some hints, by a due attention to which, one may attain the right management of the voice, and be enabled to avoid those faults. The first I shall observe, though not in itself a very great, yet is a very common fault, and often proves the source of several others; it is the *straining of the voice* beyond its natural key, commonly the effect of a laudable desire to make one's self be heard in a large congregation. This however is one of those expedients, that rarely fail to defeat the purpose which occasioned them. What is thus spoken in a forced tone (though the note in the musical scale emitted by the voice be higher) is neither so distinct, nor so audible, as what is spoken in the natural tone of voice. There is a very great difference between speaking high, and speaking loud; though these two are often confounded. Women's voices are a full octave higher or shriller (for that is all the term means) than men's, and yet they are much less fitted for being heard in a large auditory. In a chime or music bells the bass notes are all struck on the biggest bells, and the treble notes on the smallest. Accordingly the former are heard at a distance, which the feeble sound of the other cannot reach. The same thing may be observed of the pipes in an organ. Besides, it is a much greater stress to the speaker, to hold out with his voice raised ever so little above its natural pitch, and it lays him under several disadvantages in respect of pronunciation, of which I shall have occasion to take notice afterwards.

A second fault which is very common with preachers is too great *rapidity of utterance*. This is an

ordinary, though not a necessary consequence of committing a discourse to memory and repeating it. A person, without particularly guarding against it, is apt to contract an impatience to deliver the words, as fast as they occur to his mind, that so he may give them to the audience, whilst he is sure he can do it. This also is a great hinderance to the attainment of an affecting or energetic pronunciation; besides that it greatly fatigues the attention of the hearer, whom, after all, many things must escape, which otherwise he might have retained.

A third fault I shall observe is a *theatrical and too violent manner*. This, though it seems to proceed from a commendable ardour, sins against propriety in many ways. It suits not the gravity of the subject; and to appear destitute of all command of one's self doth not befit one who would teach others to obtain a perfect mastery over their passions. The preacher's manner in general ought to be modest, at the same time earnest and affecting.

A fourth fault, which is indeed the opposite extreme to that now mentioned, is an *insipid monotony*, by which every thing that is said, whether narration, explanation, argumentation or address to the passions, is uniformly and successively articulated in the same listless, lifeless manner. And this is a much greater fault than the preceding. The former offends only hearers of taste and reflection, but the latter, all who can either understand or feel. The preacher, in such a case, exhibits the appearance of a school boy who repeats a lesson he hath conned over, but who doth not form a single idea of what he is saying from beginning to end.

The fifth, and only other remarkable fault in pronunciation I shall mention, is a *sing-song manner;* or what we commonly call a cant, which is something like a measure of a tune, that the preacher unintermittedly runs over and over, 'till he conclude his discourse. This, as a kind of relief to the lungs, is what a strained voice (the fault in speaking first mentioned) when it becomes habitual, generally terminates in, and though it hath not the same air of indifference with the monotony, is in other respects liable to the same objections. It marks no difference in the nature of the things said, and consequently (though the tune itself were not unpleasant) it may prove a lullaby, and dispose the hearers to sleep, but is quite unfit for awakening their attention. Both the last mentioned faults are the too frequent (not the unavoidable) consequence of the common method of rehearsing a discourse by rote, which has been verbatim committed to memory. This very naturally leads the speaker to fix the closest attention on the series of the words prepared, that he may not lose the thread. And this as naturally carries off his attention entirely from the thought.

The consideration of these things hath often led me to doubt, which of the two methods of delivery, reading or repeating, we ought to recommend to students, or at least which of the two, if universal, would probably have the best effect, and be attended with fewest disadvantages. I shall candidly lay before you, what hath occurred to my thoughts on this subject, and leave it to every one's own judgment to decide for himself. That a discourse well spoken hath a stronger effect than one well read, will hardly bear a question. From this manifest truth I very early concluded, and

was long of the opinion, that the way of reading sermons should be absolutely banished from the pulpit. But from farther experience, I am now disposed to suspect, that this conclusion was rather hasty. Though by proper culture the powers of oratory may be very much improved, yet, by no culture whatever will these powers be created, where nature hath denied them. A certain original and natural talent or genius for art to work upon, is as necessary in the orator, as in the poet. Now if all, who have the ministry in view, were possest of this natural talent, the conclusion we mentioned would certainly be just. But so far is this from being the case, that experience plainly teacheth us, it is the portion of very few. But though there be not many, who will ever arrive at the pathos, the irresistible force of argument and the sublimity, in which the glory of eloquence consists, there are not a few who by a proper application of their time and study, will be capable of composing justly, of expressing themselves not only with perspicuity, but with energy, and of reading. I say not in a proper and inoffensive, but even in an affecting manner. So much more common are the talents necessary for the one accomplishment, than those requisite for the other. I have indeed heard this point controverted, and people maintain, that it was as easy to acquire the talent of repeating with energy and propriety, as of reading. But I could hardly ever think them serious who said so, or at least that they had duly examined the subject. There are, no doubt, degrees of excellence in reading, as well as in repeating, and they are but few, that attain to the highest degree in either. But in what may be regarded as good in its kind, though not the best; I speak within

bounds, when I say, that I have found six good readers, for one who repeated tolerably. As to my personal experience I shall frankly tell you, what I know to be fact. I have tried both ways; I continued long in the practice of repeating, and was even thought (if people did not very much deceive me) to succeed in it; but I am absolutely certain, that I can give more energy, and preserve the attention of the hearers better, to what I read than ever it was in my power to do to what I repeated. Nor is it any wonder. There are difficulties to be surmounted in the latter case, which have no place at all in the former. The talents in other respects are the same, that fit one to excel in either way. Now as it will, I believe, be admitted by every body who reflects, that a discourse well read is much better than one ill spoken, I should not think it prudent to establish any general rule, which would probably make bad speakers of many, who might otherwise have proved good readers. There is something in charging one's memory with a long chain of words and syllables, and this is one of the difficulties I hinted at, and then running on, as it were, mechanically in the same train, the preceding word associating and drawing in the subsequent, that seems by taking off a man's attention from the thought to the expression, to render him insusceptible of the delicate sensibility as to the thought, which is the true spring of rhetorical pronunciation. That this is not invariably the effect of getting by heart, the success of some actors on the stage is an undeniable proof. But the comparative facility, arising from the much greater brevity of their speeches, and from the relief and emotion that is given to the player by the action of the other dialogists in the scene, makes the

greatest difference imaginable in the two cases. A man, through habit, becomes so perfectly master of a speech of thirty or forty lines, which will not take him three minutes to repeat, that he hath no anxiety about recollecting the words: his whole attention is to the sentiment. The case must be very different, when the memory is charged with a discourse, which will take thirty minutes to deliver.

Besides, it must be observed, there is a great difference between speaking an oration and repeating it. In the former case, the orator may by premeditation have made himself master of the argument; he may have arranged his matter in his own mind, but as to the expression, trusts to that fluency and command of language which by application and practice have become habitual to him. It is impossible, that any speech on any motion in the house of commons, except the first speech, should be gotten by heart. For every following one, if pertinent, must necessarily have a reference to what was said on the argument before. In like manner it is only the first pleading in a cause at the bar, which can have the advantage of such preparation. Whether those, who open the cause or question, always avail themselves of this power, and previously commit to memory every sentence they utter, I know not. But we do not find, that these speeches have generally a remarkable superiority in point of elocution, over those which follow, as it is certain, they can have no superiority at all in point of pronunciation. Several of Cicero's best orations were on the defensive side, and therefore could not have been composed verbatim before they were spoken. And the most celebrated oration of Demosthenes, that

which at the time had the most wonderful effect upon his auditory, and raised to the highest pitch the reputation of the speaker, the oration περι στεφανου, was an answer to Æschines's accusation; and such an answer as it was absolutely impossible should have been, either in words or method, prepared before hearing his adversary. So close is the respect it has, not only to the sentiments, but to the very expressions that had been used against him. And the two parties were at the time such rivals and enemies as to exclude the most distant suspicion of concert. It deserves our notice, that instances of all the faults in pronunciation above enumerated, except the last, are to be found both in the senate and at the bar; particularly the two extremes of violence and monotony. And these are easily accounted for. The one is a common consequence of strong passions, where there is neither the taste nor the judgment that are necessary for managing them. The other generally prevails where there is a total want both of taste and of feeling. It is remarkable, that the only other fault mentioned, the canting pronunciation, is hardly ever found but in the pulpit. Nay, what would at first appear incredible, I have known ministers whose sing-song manner in preaching was a perfect soporific to the audience, pronounce their speeches in the general assembly with great propriety and energy. The only account I can make of this difference is, that in the two former cases, in the senate and at the bar, the speeches are almost always spoken. Committing the whole, word for word, to memory, is, I believe, very rarely attempted. Now the general assembly partakes of the nature both of a senate and court of judicature. Sermons, on the contrary, are more generally repeated.

They are very few who trust to a talent of speaking extempore in the pulpit. Now when once the attention, as was hinted already, loses hold of the thought, and is wholly occupied in tracing the series of the words, the speaker insensibly, to relieve himself from the difficulty of keeping up his voice at the same stretch, falls into a kind of tune, which, without any regard to the sense of what is said, returns as regularly, as if it were played on an instrument. One thing further may be urged in favour of reading, and it is of some consequence, that it always requires some preparation. A discourse must be written before it can be read. When a man who does not read, gets over, through custom, all apprehension about the opinion of his hearers, or respect for their judgment, there is some danger, that laziness may prompt him to speak without any preparation, and consequently to become careless what he says. But to return, the sum of what has been offered, is not that reading a discourse is universally preferable to repeating it. By no means. But only that if the latter way admits of higher excellence, the former is more attainable and less hazardous.

It is to be regretted that the training of young men, who are intended for public speakers, to read and speak properly and gracefully is so much and so universally neglected in latter times. The ancients both of Greece and of Rome, sensible of the importance of this article in educating their youth for the forum and for the senate, were remarkably attentive to it; and it must be owned their success in this way was correspondent to their care. For however much we moderns appear to have surpassed them in some, and equalled them perhaps in all other arts, our inferiority in regard

to eloquence will hardly bear a dispute. It is not possible however, that so great a defect in modern education should be supplied by a few cursory directions, which is all that your leisure and the prosecution of the other and still more important branches of my plan will here give scope for. To attain a mastery in the art of speaking would require much study, improved by exercise and corrected by conversation. But though we cannot do all that we would, let us not for this think ourselves excused from doing what we can.

The first thing then I would advise the young preacher at his setting out, in regard to the management of his voice, is cautiously to avoid beginning on too high a clef. His natural tone of speaking in conversation is that which will always succeed best with him, in which, if properly managed, he will be best heard, be able to hold out longest, and have most command of his voice in pronouncing. Let it be observed, that in conversing (according as the company is large or small) we can speak louder or softer, without altering the tone. Our aim therefore ought to be, to articulate the words distinctly, and to give such a forcible emission to the breath in pronouncing, as makes the voice reach farther without raising it to a higher key. Every man's voice has naturally a certain compass, above which it cannot rise, and below which it cannot sink. The ordinary tone, on which we converse, is nearly about the middle of that compass. When we make that therefore, as it were, the key-note of our discourse, we have the power with ease of both elevating and depressing the voice, in uttering particular words, just as the sense requires, that they be uttered emphatically or otherwise. When we recommend the ordinary tone

of the voice in conversation, as that on which we ought in public to attempt to speak, we would not be understood to recommend an insipid monotony; we only mean to signify, that this should serve as the foundation note, on which the general tenour of the discourse should run. On the contrary, it being one of the best preservatives against that egregious fault in speaking, by giving the voice the greatest latitude both in rising and falling with facility, is one reason that I so earnestly recommend it. Every body must be sensible, that when the voice is at an unnatural stretch, it can give no emphasis to any word whatever without squeaking; so that the speaker, for the ease of his own lungs, is forced to take refuge, either in a tiresome monotony or a drowsy cant. Besides, it deserves to be remarked, that most men, when earnest in conversation on an affecting subject, naturally, without any study, give their voice the proper inflections which the import of what is said requires. When, therefore, we speak in public, if we ourselves enter seriously into the subject, and are as it were interested in it, we shall without any effort, being taught by nature and assisted by habit, give such an emphasis to the words which require it, and such cadence to the sentences, as in conversing on serious and moving subjects we never fail to employ. Whereas if we speak on a forced key, we cannot have the same assistance either from nature or habit.

A second direction I would give, is to be very careful in proceeding in your discourse, to preserve in the general tenour of it the same key on which you began. Many, who begin right, insensibly raise their voice as they advance, till at last they come to speak in a tone

that is very painful to themselves, and by necessary consequence, grating to their hearers. It will require much care, attention and even practice to prevent this evil.

It will not a little contribute to this end, that ye diligently observe the following direction, the third I am to give on this subject, which is that ye always begin by speaking very deliberately and rather slowly. Even a drawling pronunciation, in the introduction of a discourse, is more pardonable than a rapid one. Most subjects will require that ye grow somewhat quicker as you advance. But of all things be careful to avoid that uniform rapidity of utterance, which is very unattractive, as having the evident marks of repeating a lesson by rote, which is so great an enemy to all emphasis and distinction in pronouncing, and which, besides, even to the most attentive hearer, throws out the things delivered faster than his mind is able to receive them. The fourth and last direction I shall give, is what was hinted already, frequent practising in reading, speaking and repeating before one sensible companion at the least, or more where they may be had, who should be encouraged to offer with freedom and candour such remarks and censures as have occurred. So much for the general rules of rhetorical pronunciation in preaching. A great deal more might be profitably offered; but where such a multiplicity of subjects demand our attention and a share of our time, a great deal on each must be left to your own application and diligence.

LECTURE V.

Discourses distributed into various kinds, as addressed to the Understanding, the Imagination, the Passions, and the Will.

I PROCEED, in the third place, to inquire into the various kinds of discourses, which the christian eloquence admits, and the rules in regard to composition, that ought to be followed in each. Before I enter on it, I will take the freedom to digress a little, and give you a brief account of the origin of the plan, that I am going to lay before you, which may be regarded as the outline of an institute of pulpit eloquence. When I was myself a student of divinity in this place, there were about seven or eight of us fellow students, who, as we lived mostly in the town, formed ourselves into a society, the great object of which was our mutual improvement, both in the knowledge of the theory of theology, and also in whatever might be conducive to qualify us for the practical part or duties of the pastoral function. We added to our original number, as we found occasion, from time to time, for our society subsisted a good many years. Several valuable members have already finished the part assigned them by Providence on this stage. As to those who remain, I shall only say, in general, that they are all men of consideration and character in the church. I should no

have been so particular, but that I would gladly by the way recommend the practice of forming such small societies, when it can conveniently be accomplished. I can assure you from my own experience, that when there is a proper choice of persons, an entire confidence in one another, and a real disposition to be mutually useful, it is one of the most powerful means of improvement that I know. Amongst other things discussed in this small society, one was, an inquiry into the nature of sermons and other discourses proper for the pulpit, the different kinds into which they might fitly be distributed, and the rules of composition that suited each. On this subject we had several conversations. When these were over, I had the task assigned me to make out a short sketch or abstract of the whole. This, I the more readily undertook, as it had been, for some time before, a favourite study of mine, having, when qualifying myself for another business, given some attention to the forensic oratory of the ancients, and having afterwards remarked both the analogies and differences between it and the christian eloquence. Of this abstract, every one who chose it took a copy; and as we had no object but general usefulness, every one was at liberty to communicate it to whom he pleased. I have a copy of this still in my possession, and as in the main I am at present of the same sentiments, I shall freely use it in the lectures I am to give on this subject. At the same time I do not intend servilely to follow it, but shall make such alterations as I shall see cause; for I acknowledge, that further experience hath made me in some particulars change my opinion. Besides suggesting to you the advantages that may redound from such small societies form-

ed among students for mutual improvement, I had another reason for prefacing my prelections on the composition of pulpit discourses with this anecdote, which was, that I might not appear to arrogate more merit than truly belonged to me. To come therefore to the point in hand; it was observed in a former lecture that the word eloquence, in its greatest latitude, denotes that art or talent by which the discourse is adapted to its end. Now all the legitimate ends of speaking, whatever be the subject, you will find, if you attend to it, are reducible to these four. Every speech hath, or ought to have, for its professed aim, either to enlighten the understanding, to please the imagination, to move the passions, or to influence the will.

The first of these may be subdivided into two others. When a speaker addresseth himself to the understanding, he proposes the instruction of his hearers, and that, either by explaining some doctrine unknown or not distinctly comprehended by them, or by proving some position disbelieved or doubted by them. In other words, he proposeth either to dispel ignorance or to vanquish error. In the one, his aim is their information, in the other, their conviction. Accordingly the predominant quality of the former is perspicuity, of the latter argument. By that, we are made to know; by this, to believe.

The name of address to the imagination may seem at first, to some hearers, to convey a notion of too much levity, to be a suitable characteristic of any thing which ought to come from the pulpit. But this is a mere prejudice, arising from an unfavourable sense that is sometimes put upon the word imagination, as opposed to truth and reality. Whereas with us, it

only means that faculty of the mind, whereby it is capable of conceiving and combining things together, which in that combination have neither been perceived by the senses, nor are remembered. Now in that acceptation of the word, let it be observed, that all fables, apologues, parables, and allegories are addressed to the imagination. Poetry, for the most part, both sacred and profane, is an address of this sort; in like manner all prophecy. Indeed in the Jewish idiom poetry and prophecy were synonymous terms. Hence it is, that the apostle Paul speaking of the Cretans, does not scruple to call one of their poets, though a pagan, a prophet of their own. This only by the way, in order to remove any dislike or unfavourable prepossession which may be occasioned by the name.

In regard to preaching, the only subject with which we are at present concerned, the imagination is addressed, by exhibiting to it a lively and beautiful representation of a suitable object. As in this exhibition the task of the orator, like that of the painter, consisteth in imitation, the merit of the work results entirely from these two sources, dignity as well in the subject or thing imitated, as in the manner of imitation, and resemblance in the performance or picture. The principal scope for this kind of address is in narration and description, and it attains the summit of perfection in what is called the sublime, or those great and noble images, which, when in suitable colouring presented to the mind, do, as it were, distend the imagination, and delight the soul, as with something superlatively excellent. But it is evident, that this creative faculty the fancy frequently lends her aid in promoting still nobler ends. From her exuberant stores, most of those

tropes and figures are derived, which have such a marvellous efficacy in rousing the passions, and, by some secret, sudden and inexplicable association, awakening all the tenderest emotions of the heart. In that case, the address of the orator is intended not ultimately, to astonish by the loftiness of the images, or to charm by the beauteous resemblance, which the painting bears to nature, nay it will not permit the hearers even a moment's leisure for making the comparison, but as by some magical spell, hurries them, before they are aware, into love, pity, grief, terror, aversion or desire. It therefore assumes the denomination of pathetic, which is the characteristic of the third species of discourses, that are addressed to the passions.

The fourth and last kind, the most complex of all, which is calculated to influence the will, and persuade to action, as it is in reality an artful mixture of that which proposeth to convince the judgment, and that which interests the passions, its distinguishing excellency results from these two, the argumentative and the pathetic incorporated together. These acting with united force, constitute that vehemence, that warm eviction, that earnest and affecting contention, which is admirably fitted for persuasion, and hath always been regarded as the supreme qualification in an orator. Of the four sorts of discourses now enumerated it may be observed in general, that each preceding species, in the order above exhibited, is preparatory to the subsequent, that each subsequent species is founded on the preceding, and that thus they ascend in a regular progression. Knowledge, the object of the understanding, furnisheth materials for the fancy; the fancy culls, compounds, and by her mimic art disposes these ma-

terials so as to affect the passions; the passions are the natural spurs to volition or action, and so need only to be right directed. So much in general for the different kinds of discourses on whatever subject, from the bare consideration of the object addressed, understanding, imagination, passion, will, and those fundamental principles of eloquence in the largest acceptation which result from these. But as the kind addressed to the understanding, has been subdivided into two, that which barely explains, and that which proves, I shall henceforth consider them as five in number.

I come now to apply these universal principles to the particular subject, with which we are immediately concerned. It hath been occasionally observed, oftener than once, that the reformation of mankind is the great and ultimate end of the whole ministerial function, and especially of this particular branch, preaching or discoursing from the pulpit. But it is not necessary, that the ultimate end of the whole should be the immediate scope of every part. It is enough, that the immediate scope of the part be such, that the attainment of it is manifestly a step towards the ultimate end of the whole. In other words, the former ought always to serve as a means for the effecting of the latter. Let us proceed in considering the propriety of particular and immediate ends by this rule.

First then, in order to effect the reformation of men, that is, in order to bring them to a right disposition and practice, there are some things which of necessity they must be made to know. No one will question, that the knowledge of the nature and exent of the duties which they are required to practise, and of the truths and doctrines which serve as motives to practice, is ab-

solutely necessary. The explication of these in the pulpit forms a species of discourses which falls under the first class above mentioned. It is addressed to the understanding, its aim is information, the only obstacle it hath to remove is ignorance. Sermons of this sort we shall henceforth distinguish by the term *explanatory*. Now if knowledge is the first step in religion, faith is certainly the second, for the knowledge of any tenet influenceth our conduct only so far as it is believed. My knowledge of the peculiar doctrines maintained by Mahometans nowise affects my practice. Why? Because I do not believe them. When therefore revelation in general, or any of its fundamental doctrines in particular are known to be called in question by a considerable part of the congregation, it is doubtless incumbent on the preacher earnestly to contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints, and consequently it must be a proper subject for the pulpit to defend the cause of religion by refuting the cavils of gainsayers and publicly evincing the truth. Such defence and confutation form a species of discourses which falls under the second class above mentioned. It is addressed to the understanding, its aim is conviction; the adversaries it encounters are scepticism and error. Discourses of this sort we shall distinguish by the name *controversial*. Both the above sorts, the explanatory and the controversial, as they coincide in the object addressed, the understanding of the hearers, go also under the common name of instructive.

Further, as one way, and indeed a very powerful way, of recommending religion is by example, it must be conducive to the general end of preaching above mentioned, to make it sometimes the business of a sermon,

to exhibit properly any known good character, by giving a lively narrative of the person's life, or of any signal period of his life, or of any particular virtue, as illustrated through the different periods of his life. For performances of this kind the history of our Lord Jesus Christ affords the richest fund of matter. In like manner the lives of the saints recorded in scripture, the prophets, apostles, and martyrs, such at least with which from the accounts given in holy writ we have occasion to be acquainted, make very proper subjects. Add to these, what are called funeral sermons, or merited encomiums on the life and actions of deceased persons, eminent for virtue and piety, whose character is well known to the people addressed. It may not want its use, on the contrary to delineate sometimes in proper colours the conduct of the vicious. To do justice to the respectable qualities and worthy actions of a good man is to present an audience with an amiable and animated pattern of christian excellence, which by operating on their admiration and their love, raiseth in their mind a pious emulation. That we are, without attending to it, induced to imitate what we admire and love, will not admit a question. Exhibitions of this kind from the pulpit form a species of discourses which falls under the third class above mentioned. They are addressed to the imagination, and their scope is to promote virtue by insinuation; the view of excellence engages love, love awakes emulation, and that as naturally produces imitation. In order to distinguish such discourses, we shall henceforth denominate them *commendatory*.

Again, when an audience is about to be employed in any solemn office of religion, which, that it may prove

edifying to those engaged in it, requires in them a devout, a recollected, and a benevolent disposition of soul, it will doubtless tend to promote the general end, reformation, to make it the immediate scope of the sermon, by working on the affections of the audience, to mould them into a suitable frame. Sermons of this sort fall under the fourth class above mentioned, they are addressed to the passions, and their scope is to beget virtuous and devout habits by conformation. This species of discourses we call *pathetic*. It deserves however to be remarked, that the pathos excited by the preacher, ought ever to be accompanied with, and chastened by piety, submission and charity. At the same time, that it conveys both light and heat to the soul, it is pure and inoffensive; like that wherein God appeared to Moses in the bush which burned but was not consumed. It is this kind of *pathos* in its lowest degree, which the French devotional writers have distinguished by the name of *onction*, but for which we have not a proper term in English. Mr. Gibbon, a late celebrated historian, says in one place, after Jortin, that what the French call *onction* the English call *cant*. This on some occasions may be true; but it is not the constant or even the general meaning of the word. What the English call cant in preaching, is no other than a frequent recurrence to certain common words and phrases, with which the people are delighted merely through habit, but which convey no sound instruction whatever. That termed *onction* by the French is such a manner in the speaker, as convinces the hearers that he is much in earnest, that he speaks from real affections to them, and thereby strongly engages their attention. That cant with ignoran

hearers may produce an effect somewhat similar, is not to be denied. But the result upon the whole cannot be the same. *Onction* is an excellent vehicle for instruction; but where no instruction is conveyed, the hearer can be rendered neither wiser nor better by mere cant; he may be hereby made a greater bigot and a greater fool. The two last kinds of discourses, it must be owned, are near a-kin to each other, and very apt to be confounded. The enemies they combat are indifference and listlessness. If we thought it necessary to observe a scrupulous exactness in distinguishing, we should rather say (for the words are not synonymous) that the enemy of the former is indifference, and of the latter listlessness. And let me add, these often prove more dangerous adversaries to religion, than others of more hostile appearance and of more formidable names.

Finally, it will not be questioned, that it will frequently be proper, to make it the direct design of a discourse to persuade to a good, or to dissuade from a bad life in general, or to engage to the performance of any particular duty, or to an abstinence from any particular sin, and that either from all the arguments, or from any one class of arguments afforded by the light of nature, or by revelation, and adapted to the purpose. Discourses of this sort fall under the fifth and last class above mentioned. They are addressed to the will; their aim is persuasion. The enemies they combat, are irreligion and vice. Such sermons we discriminate by the term *persuasive*.

Let us now, for further illustration of the subject, consider whether the different sorts of discourses from the pulpit above enumerated bear any analogy to the differ-

ent sorts of orations treated of by ancient rhetoricians. These both Greeks and Romans, after Aristotle, have distributed into three kinds, the judiciary, the demonstrative and the deliberative. The *judiciary*, is the name by which the Stagyrite has thought fit to distinguish the pleadings of advocates or counsellors, whether in accusation of an adversary, or in defence of a client. As in all such pleadings, and indeed in all litigation whatever, there is something affirmed by one of the litigants, which is denied by the other, so the aim of each is to convince the bench, that his representation is agreeable to truth, and to refute the arguments of his antagonist. The point in dispute is sometimes a question of fact. Did the defendant do, or not do, the action, with which he is charged by the plaintiff? Sometimes it is a question of right. The fact may be undeniable; and the only point in debate, Was it right, wrong, or indifferent? lawful or criminal? Sometimes indeed both points may be contended by the parties. But it doth not belong to us, to enter into these minutiæ, or consider the different sources of topics, whence the proof must be derived. Only from what hath been said, it is manifest that this species, from its very nature, is perfectly analogous to the second class of sermons, the controversial. It is directed to the understanding; its aim is conviction; the adversaries it professeth to combat, are doubtfulness and mistake. The *demonstrative*, a name given to those panegyrics or funeral orations, which were sometimes by public authority pronounced in honour of departed patriots and heroes, must, from the design of insinuating the love of virtue by exhibiting such examples to their imitation, so exactly and so evidently coincide in form and composition (however different

in regard to matter or subject) to the third class of sermons above mentioned, the commendatory, that I should think it unnecessary to attempt any further illustration of it. Only it may not be amiss to observe here by the way, that to this political expedient among the ancient Greeks and Romans, of paying such public honours to their great men departed, perhaps more than to any other, that love of their country, that contempt of life, and that thirst of military glory, for which they were so remarkable, is to be ascribed. The term *deliberative* is applied to speeches in the senate or in the assembly of the people, whose express aim is to persuade the audience to come to a certain resolution, in regard to their conduct as a commonwealth or state, such as, to declare war, or to make peace, to enter into an alliance, or the contrary. Discourses of this sort must evidently be in many respects very similar to the fifth and last class of sermons above mentioned. They are addressed to the will, their aim is persuasion. The enemies they combat are temerity, imprudence, and other such vices, considered particularly as political evils, as prejudicial to the interest or honour of the state. Nay there will be often found a pretty considerable coincidence in the topics, from which the arguments, in both these kinds of persuasives, are commonly drawn. The useful, the honourable, the equitable, are considerations entirely well adapted to each. To the first and fourth kinds of sermons mentioned, there is not found any thing in the institutes of rhetoricians which can be denominated analogous. The first, the explanatory, is indeed, of all kinds, the simplest, and may in respect of form be considered, as bearing a resemblance to the lessons delivered

in the schools of the philosophers, in regard to which, no person, as far as I know, has thought it necessary to lay down rules. The fourth kind, the pathetic, hath in point of aim more similarity to the eloquence of the theatre, tragedy in particular, than to that either of the bar or of the senate. But the difference in form, arising from the nature of the work, between all dramatic compositions, and the discourses prepared for the pulpit, is so extremely great, that I have not judged it necessary hitherto so much as to name this species of oratory.

And as probably I shall not have occasion in these prelections to mention it hereafter, I shall now take the liberty to give you briefly, in passing, my sentiments concerning theatrical performances, and the use which may be made of them by the Christian orator. As to the drama in general, it is manifestly no more than a particular form, in which a tale or fable is exhibited; and, if the tale itself be moral and instructive, it would require no small degree of fanaticism to make one think, that its being digested into so many dialogues and dressed up in the dramatic form, can render it immoral and pernicious. So much for the question of right, as I may call it. If from this, we proceed to a question of fact, to which the other very naturally gives occasion, and inquire, whether the greater number of modern plays, be such tales as we can really denominate moral and instructive, or on the contrary such as have a tendency to vitiate the principles and debauch the practice of the spectators; to this point, I acknowledge, it is more difficult to give a satisfactory answer. I own indeed, that in my judgment the far greater part of our comedies, I say not all, merit the

latter character, rather than the former. For not to mention the gross indecencies with which many of them abound, (and to the reproach of our national taste, as well as morals, English comedy perhaps more than any other) what is generally the hero of the piece, but a professed rake or libertine, who is a man of more spirit, forsooth, than to be checked in his pursuits by the restraints of religion, the dictates of conscience, the laws of society, or (which were accounted sacred even among pagans and barbarians) by the rights of hospitality and of private friendship? Such a one, the poet, in order to recommend him to the special favour of the audience, adorns with all the wit and humour and and other talents, of which he himself is master, and always crowns with success in the end. Hence it is, that the stage with us may, without any hyperbole, be defined, the school of gallantry and intrigue, in other words, the school of dissoluteness. Here the youth of both sexes may learn to get rid of that troublesome companion modesty, intended by Providence as a guard to virtue, and a check against licentiousness. Here vice may soon provide herself in a proper stock of effrontery for effectuating her designs, and triumphing over innocence. But besides the evil that too commonly results from the nature and conduct of the fable, there is another, in the tendency to dissipation and idleness, the great enemies of sobriety, industry and reflection, which theatrical amusements ordinarily give to the younger part of the spectators. On the other hand, are there no advantages which may serve as a counterbalance to these evils? There are some advantages; it would not be candid to dissemble them, but they can be no counterbalance. What is just pronuncia-

tion, easy motion and graceful action, compared with virtue? Those accomplishments are merely superficial, an external polish; this is internal and essential. But at the same time that we acknowledge, that the manner and pronunciation of the orator may be improved by that of the actor, we must also admit on the other side, that by the same means it may be injured. And I have known it, in fact, injured in consequence of too servile an imitation of the stage. I allow, that what hath been advanced regards only the modern English comedy, for, though some of our tragedies are also exceptionable in point of morals, yet they are comparatively but a few, and those by no means faulty in the same way and much less to the same degree. And as I would with equal freedom approve, and even recommend what I think laudable and useful, as I would censure what I think blameable and hurtful, I cannot deny, but that both in regard to the sentiments, and in the wonderful talent of operating on the passions, the tragic poet will often give important lessons to the preacher. I would be far then from dissuading you from consulting occasionally whatever may contribute to your improvement. Our great apostle, as we learn from his history and epistles, did not scruple to read the dramatic pieces of heathen poets; nay he has even thought fit sometimes to quote their sentiments with approbation, and to give their very words the sanction of sacred writ. Where debates arise on any subject, it is almost invariably the case, that both sides run to extremes, alike deserting truth and moderation. It is the part of a wise man, like the bee, to extract from every thing what is good and salutary; and to guard against whatever is of a contrary quality. But I am

aware, that the most of what I have said on this subject may be looked on as a digression. I acknowledge, it in a great measure is so; but as the mention of it was perfectly apposite, and as few topics have occasioned warmer disputes among christians, I did not think it suited that decorum of character, which I would wish always to preserve, to appear artfully, when a fair opportunity offers, to avoid telling freely my opinion.

LECTURE VI.

On the Composition of Lectures.

In my last lecture on the subject of pulpit eloquence I told you, that every discourse was addressed either to the understanding of the hearers, to their imagination, to their passions, or to their will. As those addressed to the understanding, may be intended either for explaining something unknown to them, or for proving something disbelieved or doubted by them, sermons in the largest acceptation of the word may be distributed into five classes, the explanatory, the argumentative or controversial, the demonstrative or commendatory, the pathetic, and the persuasive. It will not be amiss here, in order to prevent mistakes, to take notice of the particular import which I mean to give to some terms, as often as I employ them on this subject. The first I shall mention is the term *demonstrative*, which in the application usual with rhetoricians, hath no relation to the sense of the word as used by mathematicians. Here it hath no concern with proof or argument of any kind, but relates solely to the strength and distinctness with which an object is exhibited, so as to render the conceptions of the imagination almost equal in vivacity and vigour with the perceptions of sense. This is entirely agreeable to the

use, both of the Latin word *demonstrativus*, and of the Greek *αποδεικτικος* among critics, orators and poets. Another difference I beg you will remark, is between *conviction* and *persuasion*, which, in common language, are frequently confounded. To speculative truth, the term, *conviction*, only with its conjugates, ought to be applied. Thus we say properly, I am convinced of the being of a God. In popular language, we should sometimes in this case say *persuaded*, but this application of the term is evidently inaccurate. Hé hath proved the truth of revelation to my full conviction. I attempted to convince him of his error. And even in regard to moral truth, when no more is denoted but the assent of the understanding, the proper term is to convince. I am convinced it is my duty, yet I cannot prevail on myself to do it. This is well illustrated by that of the poet,

Video meliora proboque,
Deteriora sequor.

I am convinced, but not persuaded; My understanding is subdued but not my will: the first term always and solely relates to opinion, the second to practice. The operation of conviction is merely on the understanding, that of persuasion, is on the will and resolution. Indeed the Latin word *persuadeo*, is susceptible of precisely the same ambiguity with the English. It is this double meaning, which gave occasion to that play upon the word used by Augustine, when he said, "Non persuadebis, etiamsi persuaseris." The import of which in plain English manifestly is, Though your arguments may convince my reason, they shall not determine my resolution: Or, you may convince, but shall not persuade me. The first of the distinctions

now mentioned will serve to discriminate the argumentative or controversial, from the demonstrative or commendatory, the other distinguishes the controversial from the persuasive.

I would further observe, that though any one discourse admits only one of the ends above enumerated as the principal, nevertheless in the progress of a discourse, many things may be advanced, which are more immediately and apparently directed to some of the other ends of speaking. But then it ought always to appear, that such ends are introduced as means, and rendered conducive to that which is the primary intention. Accordingly the propriety of these secondary ends, will always be inferred from their subserviency to the principal design. For example, a sermon of the first or second kinds, the explanatory or the controversial, addressed to the understanding and calculated to illustrate or evince some point of doctrine, may borrow aid from the imagination, and admit metaphor and comparison. But not the bolder and more striking figures, as that called phantasia, prosopopeia and the like, which are not so much intended to throw light on a subject as to excite admiration; much less will it admit an address to the passions, which never fails to disturb the operation of the intellectual faculty. Either of these, it is obvious, far from being subservient to the main design, simple explanation or proof, would distract the attention from it. Such arts, however, I cannot call them legitimate, have sometimes been successfully used, but in such cases, if impartially examined, the scope of the speaker will be found to have been more to cloud than to enlighten the understandings of his hearers, and to deceive rather than to edify. They

are of those unlucky arts, which are naturally fitted more for serving a bad cause, than a good one, and by consequence, when used in a good cause, rather hurt it with the judicious, by rendering it suspected.

Now before I proceed to consider the rules which ought to be observed in these different sorts of composition resulting from their respective natures, I shall make a few remarks on a kind of discourses very common in this country, which come not under the general name of sermons, and follow rules peculiar to themselves. As the Bible is with us protestants acknowledged to be the repository, and indeed the only original, full, and untainted repository of christian knowledge; and as the study of it is maintained to be a duty incumbent on every disciple of Christ, that kind of discourses with us commonly called *lectures*, have been devised as means of facilitating to the people the profitable reading of holy writ. We acknowledge indeed, that in all things essential to salvation, scripture is sufficiently perspicuous even to the vulgar; and that, in such important matters, if any man err, it will be found more the fault of the heart than of the head. But this acknowledgment is nowise inconsistent with the avowal, that there are in this repository many things highly useful and instructive, which do not immediately appear upon the surface, which require more time and application to enable us to discover, and in which in particular it is the province of the pastor to lend his assistance to the illiterate and the weak. That people may be put in a capacity of reading with judgment and without difficulty, those parts of scripture which are most closely connected with the christian faith and practice, *lecturing*, or as it is called

in some places, *expounding*, hath been first prescribed by our church rulers. The end or design of a lecture therefore, is to explain the train of reasoning contained, or the series of events related, in a certain portion of the sacred text, and to make suitable observations from it, in regard either to the doctrines, or to the duties of our religion. As all discourses of this kind consist of two principal parts, the explication, and the remarks or inferences, so they may be distributed into two classes, according as the one or the other constitutes the principal object of the expounder. In discourses of the first class, it is the chief design of the speaker to explain the import of a portion of scripture, which may not be perfectly clear to christians of all denominations. In the second, it is his great scope to deduce from a passage, whose general or literal meaning is sufficiently perspicuous, useful reflections concerning providence, the economy of grace, or the conduct of human life. Were we nicely to distinguish the two kinds, I should say that the ultimate end of the former is to teach the people to read the scriptures with understanding, and of the latter to accustom them to read them with reflection. The former therefore may more properly (according to the current import of the words) be termed an *exposition*, and the latter a *lecture*. And in this manner we shall afterwards distinguish them. Both are properly of the explanatory kind, though from the complex nature of the subject, the form of composition will be very different from that of the first class of sermons mentioned above. Indeed several English sermons, for instance those on the compassionate Samaritan, the prodigal son, or any other of our Lord's parables, may strictly be denominated

lectures in the sense to which we just now appropriated the term. And of this sort also are several of the homilies of the ancient fathers. Nay there are some discourses, that go under the general appellation of sermons, particularly of Bishop Hoadley and Doctor Clarke, that properly belong to that class we distinguished by the name exposition, being no other than a sort of familiar commentary on some of the most difficult passages in the epistolary writings of the apostle Paul. They differ from us in Scotland, only in the manner in which the explication is introduced from the pulpit. We take the whole portion of scripture for a text, they commonly a single verse in the end of it, by means of which all the other verses as connected, are more awkwardly ushered into the discourse; for as all these share equally in the explication, so in most cases the remarks bear no more relation to the text, than to any other sentence in the context. The relation is commonly to the whole taken together, and not to a part considered separately. That it may not be necessary to return afterwards to the consideration of these two classes of discourses, which I denominate expositions and lectures, I shall now make a few observations in regard to their composition, and so dismiss this article.

And first, as to the subject to be chosen care should be taken, that as much as possible it may be *one*, that is, one distinct passage of history, (if taken from any of the historical books of scripture) one parable, one similitude, one chain of reasoning, or the illustration of one point of doctrine or of duty. When a minister urposes in a course of teaching to give the exposition of a whole book of scripture, it is of much greater

moment, and unspeakably more conducive to the edification of the hearers, that in the distribution of the parts, more regard be had to the natural connection, that may subsist between the sentiments, than to the artificial division of the words into chapters and verses. For it is manifest, that in making this distribution of the sacred books, which by the way is an invention merely human and not very ancient, there hath often been very little attention given to the sense. You will easily conceive, that it must be still a greater fault in expounding, to confine one's self regularly, as some do, to the same or nearly the same number of verses. Nothing can tend more effectually to injure the sense, and to darken (instead of enlightening) the subject. Nothing would less fall under the description, which the apostle gives of the manner of the workman that hath no reason to be ashamed, "his rightly dividing the word of truth." To merit this praise, one must, like a skilful anatomist, chiefly attend, in the division, to the distinctive characters and limits, which nature hath assigned to the several parts; and not, like a carver for the table, merely to the size and form.

The second remark I shall make, is that if the portion of scripture be, as to the sense, not so independent of the words immediately preceding, but that some attention to these will throw light upon the sacred lesson, the preacher may very properly introduce himself to his subject by pointing out in few words the connection. There are cases in which this is necessary; there are in which we should say it were improper; and there are no doubt in which it is discretionary. Of the first kind are many passages in Paul's epistles; for though perhaps you can say of the passage with

strict propriety, it is one, because it is only one topic that is treated in it, or at least the argument is considered in one particular point of view, yet it makes, as it were, a member of a train of reasoning which runs through several chapters; and of this series it may be requisite to take a cursory review, in order to obtain a more distinct apprehension of the import of the passage read. It is improper, when there is no connection at all with the words preceding, as in the relation given us of several of the miracles performed by our Lord, which have no other connection in the history than that the one in fact preceded the other; or it may be only, that the one is first related, and the other immediately after. The same may be said of several of the parables. Some of these indeed have a natural connection with a preceding passage, having been pronounced by our Lord in the illustration of some point which he had been just inculcating. In such cases, when the design of the parable is sufficiently clear of itself, to trace the connection is not absolutely necessary. As good use however may be made of it, it cannot be called improper. This therefore is an example of those cases wherein it is discretionary. There are several other instances which the intelligent hearer will easily distinguish for himself. I shall mention only one. Were it the design of a preacher to expound to a congregation the Lord's prayer, as recorded in the sixth chapter of Matthew, he may justly consider it as a matter of mere choice, whether he shall take any notice of the words preceding or of the subsequent, because though his text be connected with both, it is so independently intelligible, and so completely one in

itself, that he is under no necessity to recur to these for the illustration of his subject.

My third observation shall be, that his exposition of the portion of scripture read, may either be, verse by verse, paragraph by paragraph, sentence by sentence, where there is any obscurity or difficulty in the verse, sentence or paragraph, that seems to require it; or it may be, by a kind of paraphrase of the whole passage. I have observed already that there are two kinds of discourses, the exposition, and the lecture, into which this class may be distributed; the former of these methods, by verses or sentences, is best suited to the first, the latter, by paraphrase, to the second. In the first, there are supposed some difficulties to be removed and some darkness to be dispelled: in order to this, more minuteness and closer attention to the several parts is necessary. In the second, as the scope of the whole passage is supposed to be abundantly perspicuous, a few pertinent introductory remarks may sometimes happily enough supersede the necessity even of a paraphrase.

The fourth observation shall be in relation to the difficulties, which, in the first species of lectures mentioned, the expounder must endeavour to remove. And they are these, an apparent inconsistency between the import of any verse or expression and the principles of right reason, or a seeming contradiction to other texts of scripture, or to any known historical fact; in like manner if the words taken literally seem to support any erroneous opinion, or to authorize any improper practice, or if the preacher is aware that it consists with the knowledge of a considerable part of his audience, that such uses are made of the words by

some sect or party still subsisting amongst us. I mention these things with the greater caution, because if the difficulties are not obvious of themselves, or are such as can be reasonably thought to have come to the knowledge of very few, if any, in the auditory, it is much better they remain unnoticed by the speaker, lest he should be imagined to have more the talent of suggesting scruples and raising difficulties than of removing them. And this will especially hold, in regard to what hath at any time been pleaded in favour of the errors of ancient or distant sects, of which the congregation knows little or nothing, and by whose arts they can be in no hazard of being seduced. If the subject were, for example, the parable of the supper, in the 14th chapter of Luke, it would be very pertinent to show that the expression "Compel them to come in," which occurs in that passage, doth not authorize persecution or force in matters of religion; because it is notorious, that this absurd use hath been and still is made of the words. But if the portion of scripture to be explained were the first chapter of the gospel by John, to what christian congregation would it answer any valuable purpose, to make them acquainted with the ravings of the Gnostics and their wild extravagancies about the *Eons?*

I shall add, that particular care ought to be taken in expounding the scriptures to the people, not to appear over-learned and over-critical in one's explications. There is no occasion to obtrude on an audience, as some do, all the jarring interpretations given by different commentators, of which it is much better that the people should remain ignorant, than that they should be apprized. For this knowledge can serve

no other purpose, than to distract their thoughts and perplex their judgment. Before you begin to build, it is necessary to remove such impediments, as lie directly in your way; but you could not account him other than a very foolish builder, who should first collect a deal of rubbish, which was not in his way, and consequently could not have obstructed his work, that he might have the pleasure and merit of removing it. And do the fantastic, absurd and contradictory glosses of commentators deserve a better name than rubbish? No, surely. But if such absurd glosses are unknown to your congregation, they are rubbish which lies not in your way. No interpretation therefore or gloss should ever be mentioned in order to be refuted, unless it be such as the words themselves on a superficial view, might seem to countenance, or such as is generally known to the people to be put upon them by some interpreters, or sects of christians. Where a false gloss cannot be reasonably supposed to be either known or thought of by the audience, it is in the preacher worse, than being idly ostentatious of his learning, to introduce such erroneous gloss or comment. And as to an excess of criticism in this exercise, it ought also doubtless carefully to be avoided. We must always remember the difference between a church and a college. In most christian congregations there are very few, if any, linguists. I do not say that in our lectures we ought never to mention the original or recur to it. Justice to the passage we explain may sometimes require it. Nor is it necessary, that our translators should be deemed infallible even by the multitude. It is enough, that we consider as the pure dictates of the Spirit those intimations, with which the prophets and apostles were

inspired. But then, on the other hand, it is neither modest nor prudent in the preacher, especially if a young man, to be at every turn censuring the translators, and pretending to mend their version. It is not modest, as they, over whom the corrector assumes a superiority, are allowed on all hands to have been men of eminent talents and erudition. And it is not prudent, as this practice never fails to produce in the minds of the people a want of confidence in their Bible, which tends greatly to lessen its authority. Therefore, though I am by no means for ascribing infallibility to any human expositors, propriety requires, that we should neither too often, nor too abruptly tax with blundering, before such a promiscuous audience as our congregations commonly are, men of so respectable memory. Manly freedom of inquiry, becoming a protestant, becoming a Briton, tempered with that decent reserve which suits the humble christian, will guard the judicious against both extremes, an overweaning conceit of his own abilities, and an implicit faith in those of others. And indeed in regard to every thing, which may be introduced either in the way of criticism or comment, it ought ever to be remembered, that it is not enough, that such an observation is just, that such an interpretation hath actually been given, or that such an opinion hath been maintained; the previous inquiry, which the preacher ought to make by himself is, whether it be of any consequence to the people to be informed of the observation, comment or opinion. This inquiry impartially made will prove a check against the immoderate indulgence of what is perhaps the natural bent of his own genius, whether it be to critical or controversial disquisition,

and which it is not always easy for youth, commonly impetuous and opinionative, duly to restrain. If on other occasions, more especially on this, the apostolical admonition ought to be sacredly observed, that "nothing proceed out of the speaker's mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers." But for our direction in this kind of discernment, no precepts, it must be acknowledged, will suffice. A fund of good sense is absolutely necessary, enlightened by a knowledge of mankind. In this, as in every other kind of composition, the maxim of the poet invariably holds,

Scribendi recte sapere est principium et fons.

I shall just add the fifth and last observation in relation to the remarks or inferences. These, as was hinted already in the exposition, whose chief aim is to throw light on the sacred text and remove the difficulties, are to be considered as only a subordinate part of the discourse; in the lecture, they are to be considered as the principal. In the former therefore they do not require to be so fully treated, as in the latter. It is enough, that the remarks are just in themselves, pertinent in regard to the subject of discourse, and exprest with sufficient perspicuity and energy. But in the lecture, properly so called, where the observations are the primary object of the speaker, and that for which the passage of scripture was chosen as a text, it is not enough that they be just, pertinent and perspicuous, they require besides, to be more copiously treated, and such of them as are of a practical nature to be more warmly enforced. Nay, they admit all that variety in respect of illustration, proof, and

recommendation, which are to be found in discourses explanatory, controversial or persuasive. Only for the sake of unity, it may be proper to add, that all the remarks compared among themselves should be congenial, and tend to illustrate one another, that is, all doctrinal, or all practical; and whether the one, or the other, that they be points nearly and mutually related, that thus the discourse may, if I may so express myself, be of one colour and tenour throughout. Quick transitions from the warmth of the pathos, to the coldness of criticism, from the moral and persuasive to the abstract and argumentative, or inversely, from the critical to the pathetic, and from the abstract to the persuasive, are neither natural nor easy. Now the transitions here, if there be any, must be quick, even immediate, since they result from the different natures of the remarks that immediately succeed one another. In the first kind, which we distinguished by the name exposition, there is no occasion for so much delicacy in regard to the inferences deduced; because in it, they being only of a secondary nature in respect to the scope of the performance, particular discussions would neither be proper nor expected. All that is requisite is that they be true, fairly deduced and properly expressed. Now thus much, whatever be the nature of the truths remarked, can make no alteration in the character of the performance. In this species, the observations are properly no more than inferences, whose evidence, illustration, or enforcement should always be found in the exposition that preceded them; whereas in the lecture properly so called, though the connection of the remarks with the portion of scripture

previously and briefly explained, ought to be very clear, they are introduced with the express view of being supported, illustrated or enforced in the body of the discourse, to which the explication of the text serves only as an introduction. So much shall serve for what we call expositions or lectures, I shall next proceed to the different sorts of sermons above defined.

LECTURE VII.

Of Explanatory Sermons.....The choice of a Subject and of Texts.

In my last prelection on the subject of pulpit eloquence, after enumerating the different sorts of discourses, from the consideration of the faculty addressed, I entered particularly into the examination of those, which with us are commonly called lectures, and which we divided into two sorts, one, whose principal end was to remove difficulties in a passage not perfectly clear; the other, whose aim was to form and enforce useful observations from a passage naturally fitted to give scope for reflection. The first we called exposition, the second lecture. I now return to the consideration of those discourses, which come under the general denomination of sermons, and which were distributed into five orders, the explanatory, the controversial, the commendatory, the pathetic and the persuasive. The first and the simplest is the explanatory, which may be defined a sermon addressed to the understanding of the hearers, and of which the direct view is to explain some doctrine of our religion, or the nature and extent of some duty. In this species of discourses, the preacher's antagonist (if I may so express myself) is ignorance, which it is his business to dispel.

The first thing, that falls under consideration, is the choice of a subject. And in this, care ought to be taken, that whether it be more or less extensive, it may be strictly and properly *one*, that it may neither be imperfect, and consequently afford the audience but an indistinct apprehension of the matter discussed, whether it be the explication of a tenet, or of a precept of christianity; nor redundant, by being conjoined with other points or topics, which however useful in themselves, are neither immediately connected with, nor necessary to the elucidation of what is properly the subject. The rule of the poet,

Sit quod vis simplex duntaxat et unum,

will be found a good rule, not only in epic and dramatic poetry, but in evey kind of composition without exception. The reason is, it is founded in nature, and what is adapted to the faculties of a being such as man. When things are brought together into a discourse, between which there is no immediate connection, that which happens to be last said goes far to obliterate out of the minds of the hearers all that went before. There being no natural and manifest relation between the things themselves, and no dependance that the one has on the other, the last mentioned thought or topic doth as it were exclude its predecessor, by entirely occupying its place. Whereas in clearing up the several parts of one entire subject, whatever it be, the explication of every other branch or member, as you advance, necessarily tends, by the laws of association in our ideas, to recal to our reflections the account given of those that preceded, with which its several parts are naturally and intimately connected. That we may form

some idea of the influence of connection, simplicity and unity upon the memory, do but consider the effect in point of remembrance, for it is of this only I am now speaking, that would be produced upon an audience by one of our Lord's parables, for example, or by a distinct passage of his history, or of that of the apostles, or by any one speech of Peter or Paul recorded in the Acts, and compare with it the effect that will be produced by reading an equal portion of the book of Proverbs, or of the 119th psalm, in neither of which was there any connection of sentiments proposed, the greater part of the first being intended merely as a collection of wise observations, but independent one of another, on the conduct of life; and the other as a collection of pious ejaculations, arranged, not by affinity in the sentiments, but by the letters in the Hebrew alphabet with which the several sentences begin. But what is necessary to constitute this unity of subject and design, we shall have occasion more particularly to consider afterwards.

A subject being chosen, the next thing to be sought is the text. This seems calculated to answer a double purpose. In the first place, it serves as a motto to the discourse, notifying to the congregation the aim and subject of the preacher; secondly, being taken from sacred writ, it adds a certain dignity and importance to the subject, shewing that it hath a foundation in scripture, the only standard of our religion. It may not be amiss here to examine a little, some objections, that have been thrown out by a celebrated writer of the present century, in his Age of Lewis the 14th, against this method so universally practised by preachers of introducing their subject to the hearers by a text.

"Perhaps," says he, "it were to be wished that in banishing from the pulpit the bad taste which dishonoured it, this custom of preaching on a text had also been banished. In fact, to speak long on a quotation of a line or two, to labour in regulating one's whole discourse by that line, such a toil appears an amusement scarcely becoming the dignity of the ministry. The text proves a sort of device, or rather riddle, which the discourse unravels. The Greeks and the Romans never knew this usage. It was in the decline of letters that it began, and time hath consecrated it." The author must here doubtless be understood to mean by Greeks and Romans, those nations whilst in a state of paganism, for that this practice was current among the Greek and the Latin fathers of the church appears manifestly from such of their works as are yet extant. And indeed to acquaint us gravely, and urge it as an argument, that the pagan priests never preached upon a text, must appear extraordinary to one who attends to this small circumstance, that they never preached at all, that there was nothing in all their various modes of superstition, which was analogous to what is called preaching among christians. And even if there had been any thing among them that bore an analogy to preaching, their example could not have had the least authority with us in this particular, as it is notorious they had no acknowledged infallible or established standard of doctrine corresponding to our Bible, whence their texts could have been drawn. But if our author alludes in this, not to the customs of the heathen priests, but to those of the demagogues and pleaders, the cases are so exceedingly dissimilar, that hardly can any comparison with propriety be made be-

tween them, or any inference drawn, from the usage of the one to what is proper in the other. If indeed we make the proper allowances for the disparity in the cases, the example of the ancient orators will be found rather to favour, than to discountenance the practice; because though they had nothing which could in strict propriety be called a text, they had in effect a subject propounded, to which they were bound in speaking to confine themselves. Thus in judiciary or forensic harangues, the summons or indictment was to all intents a text, and in the deliberative orations pronounced in the senate house or in the assembly of the people, the overture or motion which gave rise to the debate answered precisely the same purpose. At least one of the designs above mentioned, which the text with us is calculated to answer, namely, a notification to the hearers, and a remembrancer as to the subject of discourse, was fully accomplished, and as to the other end, the difference in the nature of the thing superseded the use of it. The only species of discourses with them, in which there was nothing that bore the least analogy to this so universal usage among christian teachers, was the demonstrative, or their eulogiums on the dead. And here doubtless the notoriety of the occasion and purpose of their meeting, which was commonly at funeral solemnities, rendered any verbal intimation of the subject less necessary, than in the two others already taken notice of. It may indeed be urged in answer to what hath been said, that the preacher himself may intimate his subject in as explicit terms as he pleases before he begin. But to this I would reply, that a bare intimation is not enough in a matter of so great consequence, that the effect of the

whole discourse in a great measure depends upon the attention given to it. Nothing can serve better to fix their attention than this solemn manner of ushering in the discourse, by reading a passage of sacred writ, in which every person, at least in protestant congregations, may satisfy himself by recurring to the passage mentioned in his own Bible; at the same time nothing can serve better as a monitor of the speaker's view, if the text hath been judiciously chosen, and the sermon be apposite, since the people, if they please, may have it constantly in their eye. I acknowledge at the same time that the use of a text, as either a device or an enigma, is justly reprehensible, and that the conceited choice that hath been made of passages of holy writ for this purpose, and the strange manner wherein such passages have been treated in the sermon, as when the words and phrases are more properly discoursed on than the sentiment, have given ample scope for this censure. Only it ought to be remembered, that the censure strikes solely against the abuse of this method of notifying, and not against the use of it.

It may not be amiss here to inquire a little by the way into the origin of this practice. That there is no trace of it in the ordinary discourses of our Lord and his apostles is freely owned. They spoke by immediate inspiration. They gave, by the miracles they wrought, the most authentic evidences of the authority, with which they were endowed. It did not suit the dignity of their mission, or of the spirit by which they spoke, to have recourse to any passage as giving a further sanction to their words, or as setting bounds to what they should declare. Besides, they claimed to be the heralds of a new revelation from heaven, which

though founded on the old, superadded a great deal to it. After their time, the doctrine, they taught, having been committed to writing in the histories of our Lord and his apostles, and in the epistles occasionally written by some of the latter, the teachers who succeeded them did not pretend to any new revelation, but to deliver faithfully that, and only that, which they had received from their inspired predecessors. It became accordingly an important part of their public ministry and service, to read certain portions from the writings now styled canonical, as being the great rule of faith and practice left them by these founders of the christian church. The usage they are said to have borrowed from the Jews, who since their return from the Babylonish captivity duly read in their synagogues every sabbath portions of the law and of the prophets. But indeed the reason of the thing so strongly indicates the propriety of the practice, that there is no need of recurring to Jewish example for its origin. When there was any difficulty in the passage of scripture read, this gave a natural occasion to the minister, who was the teacher of the congregation in matters of religion, to endeavour to remove it; and even where there was no difficulty, the words would often furnish a handle for seasonable exhortations and admonitions. Occasions of exhorting the people in this way were sometimes taken from the weekly lessons in the law or in the prophets in the Jewish synagogues, as appears occasionally both from our Lord's history and that of the apostles. (See for this Luke iv. 16, &c. Acts xiii. 14, &c.) Accordingly it appears that the earliest discourses from the pulpit were very much of the nature of our expositions and lectures, and that the subject was not at first arbi-

trarily chosen by the speaker, but such as came in course of reading the scriptures. It will easily be conceived how in process of time the pastors did not always think it necessary to confine themselves to the portion of reading appointed for the day, especially, as there could not fail to arise occasions of addressing the people either for warning, consolation or admonition in any particular emergency, to which other passages of sacred writ would be more directly adapted. It may also be supposed, that sometimes in their discourses they would be so much engrossed by one principal point they then wished to inculcate, as would make them narrow the size of their compositions, and limit themselves in using no more from the sacred page, than was entirely apposite to their subject. A deference however to antiquity, a veneration for the scriptures, an avowal that the writings of the prophets and apostles were the only source of all their doctrine, and a desire of supplying the people with what might serve as a remembrancer of the subject of discourse, would conspire to preserve a custom, which, though not absolutely necessary, must be allowed at least to be both decent and convenient. So much for the origin and history of this usage in christian congregations. A usage which in my opinion ought to be the more sacredly preserved, as it may be justly considered as an ancient and universal though implicit testimony, that no doctrine whatever deserves to be considered as a principle of christianity, which hath not its foundation in holy writ. After this short digression, I shall now inquire what things they are, which particularly demand our attention in the choice of a text. And on this topic I shall speak the more largely, as what is to

be offered on it will not regard the explanatory discourses only, but all the different sorts of sermons above defined.

And first, doubtless the passage chosen for this purpose ought to be plain and *perspicuous*. Without this quality of perspicuity, neither of the ends of introducing in this manner the subject can be answered by it. If obscure, and hardly at first hearing intelligible, it cannot be called a notification of the subject; as little can it give the sanction of holy writ to a subject which it doth not notify. One may err against this rule in more ways than one. First, the passage may in itself be obscure, and such as no person on a single reading, not to say the illiterate, can be supposed to divine the sense of. Such is a passage from Isaiah (xxi. 11, 12) on which I once heard a sermon. "He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, the morning cometh and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire ye; return, come." Who could pretend to say from such a text what the subject of discourse were? But there are some people of that strange turn of mind, that obscurity itself is as strong a recommendation to them, as perspicuity would be to others. Not that they are influenced in this by the sentiment of the poet,

Non fumum ex fulgore, sed ex fumo dare lucem;

for commonly there is to the full as little light in the performance, as is discernible to an ordinary understanding in the text, the only circumstance perhaps in which the choice can be said to be apposite. The real motive of such almost invariably is, to excite in the ignorant multitude an admiration of their profound

learning and most amazing penetration, who can discover wonders, where other people can perceive nothing at all. Nor do they in this particular lose their aim. But this is one of the many little arts of attracting the veneration of the populace, which is totally unworthy, I say not of the christian pastor, but of every ingenuous mind.

But further, a passage of scripture considered in itself, and its connection, may be perfectly perspicuous, and yet, as a text, may be extremely dark, because nothing that can be called a subject of discourse is suggested by it. Thus these words, "A bell and a pomegranate, and a bell and a pomegranate," (Exod. xxxix. 26) are sufficiently intelligible in scripture, as expressing certain ornaments, with which alternately the border of the pontifical ephod was to be decorated, but there is not one of a thousand who would conjecture what the design of the preacher were, who should read these words to his congregation for a text. I have heard of a declaimer, one of those (and there are several such) that will rather take the most inconvenient road in the world, than keep the beaten path, who chose the words above quoted, as the ground of a discourse on this topic, that faith and holiness in the christian life do ever accompany each other. It would not be easy to conceive a more extravagant flight. But where, you say, is the connection in the subject? It requires but a small share of fancy, to make out a figurative connection any where. Faith cometh by hearing. And could one desire a better reason for making the bell, which is sonorous, an emblem of faith? Holiness is fruitful in good works. How can it then be better represented than by a pomegranate

which is a very pleasant fruit? I am not fond of conceits in any serious matter; they have something so trivial and playful in them; but if they are any where specially unsuitable, it is in the pulpit. I remember to have seen announced in the news-papers the text of an anniversary sermon, the nature of the occasion I do not know. The text was (Jud. iv. 20) "Thou shalt say no." Here nothing can be clearer than the expression or verse, as indeed the whole passage is to which it belongs; yet nothing can be darker, than the text, as it is impossible to say with truth that it suggests any subject of discourse whatever. I will add further, that though the text, when interpreted agreeably to the meaning of the writer, may be said to suggest the subject (which cannot be said of any of those above quoted) yet when it is so figuratively expressed, as that the import of it is not sufficiently obvious to the bulk of a congregation, some more explicit proposition ought to be preferred. This observation is not to be understood as extending to those figures which are so current in scripture, and now so generally understood by christians of all denominations, that they cannot be said to hurt the plainness of the passage in the least. Of this kind are the putting of a part of religion, as the love of God, or the fear of God, for the whole, ascribing passions and bodily members to the Deity, personifying wisdom and the like, or those ordinary metaphors whereby a religious life is represented by a race, a journey, or a fight. These cannot be said to give the least obstruction in reading, to those who are but a very little acquainted with their Bible. In like manner in the choice of a text, I should think it proper to avoid passages in which there is an apparent ambiguity.

For though the context should sufficiently determine the sense, yet if the words taken separately are ambiguous, they do not distinctly answer the purpose of a notification of the speaker's aim. So much shall serve for the first article, perspicuity.

The next point to be attended to is that they be *pertinent.* It were better not to have a text, than one that would mislead the hearers as to the subject of discourse, and such would be the case, if the text pointed one way and the sermon another. And here I cannot help observing the fantastical choice, that hath been made by some English preachers, who have purposely chosen such passages as seemingly contradict what they propose as the scope of their sermon. Two very eminent men in that church, Doctor Clarke and Bishop Hoadly, in their controversial or argumentative discourses frequently adopt this method. The latter, for example, to a sermon whose chief design is to show the absurdity of the opinion that all hope of pardon is cut off in the gospel from christians, who have been wilful sinners, hath chosen for his text Heb. x. 26, 27. "If we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin: but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries." And to another which he hath titled, the Mistake of relying on Faith considered, he hath prefixed in the same way, Eph. ii. 8, "By grace are ye saved through faith." I do not here enter into the consideration of the justness of his doctrine, but the preposterousness of his choice. I know his reason was, thus to take an occasion of explaining a passage, that had been much employed on the opposite side of the

controversy, in such a way as to show that though it might apparently, it did not really (when properly understood) contradict his design. But this plea, unless when such explication is made the sole end of the discourse, in which case it falls under that species of lecture called exposition, whereof we have given some account already, otherwise, I say this plea doth by no means vindicate a choice subversive of all the purposes which a text is intended to answer. It is the less vindicable as it is perfectly unnecessary. The explication of a passage apparently opposing the doctrine maintained in the discourse, it would be much more pertinent to introduce and obviate in answering the objections and arguments of the antagonists. There appears in both these authors, and in others misled by their example, a want of taste in this particular, however great their talents in other respects may have been.

The third quality in a proper text is that it be full, that is, that it be expressive not of a part, but of the whole scope of the discourse; otherwise it imperfectly answers both the ends above mentioned: and we may say with justice, that part of the sermon is entirely without a text.

The fourth and last quality is that it be simple, nowise redundant, or expressive of more than the single scope of the sermon. An instance of a text which in the purport of it is properly complex is that above quoted, Eph. ii. 8. "By grace ye are saved through faith." The first part "by grace ye are saved," is a full and perfect text for the discussion of one point of doctrine, which is to show in what respect the source of our salvation is divine grace. The other part, "ye are saved through faith," is equally perfect for the

explication of another point, which is to show, in what respect the instrument of our salvation is faith. Let it be observed here to prevent mistakes, that a sentence may be grammatically complex, which is nevertheless simple in regard to the sentiment conveyed by it, and therefore sufficiently proper for a text. Such a one is that in Prov. iii. 17. "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." And even that last quoted from the Hebrews, though consisting of two long verses, is perfectly simple in regard to the sense.

I shall make two other observations on the subject of texts, and so conclude this article. One is, that as a great part of holy writ is historical, wherein things are simply related as spoken, without any mark of approbation or blame from the sacred historian; we ought when we can be otherwise well supplied, to avoid such places, since passages taken thence, though recorded in scripture, have not the stamp of revelation, and therefore are not fitted for answering the second purpose of a text above mentioned. I acknowledge however, that when the sentiment in itself is manifestly agreeable to the dictates of natural or the general tenour of revealed religion, it would be an excess of scrupulousness to reject it. Should every thing (for example) said by Job's three friends be avoided, because we have the best authority to affirm, that in some things they did not speak right? or should even all that Job himself said be set aside, because he acknowledged that he had uttered what he understood not, things too wonderful for him which he knew not? In all such dubious cases, great regard is to be had to the character of the speaker, the occasion, the import and

the design of the speech. On all these accounts, it was a most absurd choice which one made of a text for a sermon on the future glory of the saints in heaven. This sublime doctrine he chose to treat from these words of the serpent to our first mother Eve, Gen. iii. 5. "Ye shall be as gods knowing good and evil." For though the words taken abstractly might be apposite enough, we know that as they stand in scripture, they have no relation to the heavenly happiness; but what renders them still more exceptionable, as a text, is, they are the words of the father of lies, and in the sense in which he used them, contain a lie, and were employed but too successfully for the purpose of seduction. The only other observation I mean to make is, as scripture does not consist of a number of aphorisms, it will sometimes be difficult, if not impossible, to find texts for some very suitable subjects, conformable to all the rules above laid down. It must be owned, that in such cases, it is far better to deviate from these rules, than to avoid discussing an edifying and pertinent subject. All that can be said in that case is, that if the rules be reasonable, the deviation ought to be as little as possible. Nor let any one think this point a matter of little or no moment. As a good choice may contribute previously to rouse attention, and even to put the hearers in a proper frame for the subject to be discoursed on, as well as to keep their minds in the time of preaching from wandering from the subject; so on the contrary, an improper choice will often serve to dissipate the thoughts, and put the mind in a frame nowise suitable. I can say for myself that I have been witness to instances of both effects. I have

observed sometimes, that the bare reading of the text hath served to compose the minds of the audience into an earnest and attentive expectation of what was to be said. I have seen an ill adapted text, on the contrary, especially when there was any thing fantastic in the choice, excite a very different emotion in the audience, and dispose their minds not to be edified but amused.

LECTURE VIII.

Of the Explanatory Sermons....The Introduction....Exposition of the Text.... Partition of the Subject. Unity a principal requisite in the Subject.... How this is to be preserved....Offences against Unity.

In my last discourse on the subject of christian eloquence, I entered on the consideration of that species of sermons, which we distinguished by the name of explanatory, whose principal intention is, agreeably to the name, to explain the import of any doctrine or the extent of any precept of our religion. And first, I took occasion to inquire into the origin and history of that method now so universal in Christendom, of introducing our subject to the audience, by a portion of sacred writ called a text. I inquired into the principal uses which a text is intended to answer, and from this was naturally led to deduce the rules, whereby we ought to be directed in the choice. On this topic I was the more particular, as the same observations, though introduced merely in the examination of one species of discourses, would hold equally with regard to them all. I shall now proceed to consider the other parts of the explanatory sermon.

The first thing here, that falls under review, is the exordium or *introduction*, the great design of which is (agreeably to the rules of rhetoricians) to awaken and

fix the attention of the audience. Nothing can be more obvious, than that if the hearers will not attend, the preacher addresses them to no purpose, his speaking is no better than beating the air. The first requisite therefore, on their part, is some expectation and consequent desire. This is absolutely necessary to render them attentive. A certain degree of curiosity is natural in an auditory, just at the moment that a speaker is ready to open his mouth. But then it will depend very much on him, either to work up this favourable inclination in people into a devout and even anxious attention, or to extinguish it altogether, and not only to extinguish it, but even to create in them the contrary dispositions of weariness and disgust. Such topics therefore as manifestly tend to conciliate a favourable hearing from the congregation, as rouse in them the hope of something momentous or interesting, are especially adapted to the introductory part of the discourse. No doubt some regard must be had to this end through the whole of the performance. But it is the direct business of the exordium, to inspire a disposition, which the other parts of the sermon ought to preserve from expiring. And as to the manner, in which this purpose may be best effected, it is evident, that the preacher's topics should be drawn chiefly or solely from that which is to be the subject of discourse. The church, in this respect more delicate than either the tribunal or the senate, doth not so easily admit the urging of considerations merely personal, for winning the affection of the hearers. The venerable aged senator may not ungracefully preface his harangue with topics taken from his years, experience and public services. The hearers, conscious of the truth, will

think him well entitled to avail himself of such a plea; and the mention of these particulars will serve to rouse their attention and regard. It is only in extraordinary circumstances, that this conduct would be tolerable in the preacher. I do not say it never would. We have excellent patterns in this way in the prophet Samuel, and in the apostle Paul. See 1 Sam. xii. 1, &c. Acts xx. 18, &c. The young barrister will sometimes, just in opening, plead successfully for some indulgence to his youth and inexperience. An apology of this kind, if gracefully and naturally expressed, will be ascribed, not to want of merit, but to modesty, a quality very engaging especially in youth. The same plea would be more hazardous from the pulpit, and therefore can rarely, if ever, be attempted there. Any view that seems ultimately to point to self, any thing that may be considered as either directly or indirectly courting popular applause, will be stigmatized as vanity, a disposition which will meet with no quarter in a place consecrated as it were to the purposes of humbling the pride of man, and advancing the honour of his Maker. Passing therefore some extraordinary cases, the only topics which the preacher can safely make use of in the introduction, for gaining the devout attention of the hearers, ought to be drawn from the nature of the subject to be discussed. And these are various in different subjects. But there is no subject, with which our religion presents us, that will not afford some handle by which it may be recommended to the favourable attention of the hearers. On one subject, the leading principle for rousing our attention will be its sublimity, on another its importance, on a third perhaps its pleasantness, and on a fourth its novelty. Do not mistake

me. I by no means intend to insinuate, that any tenet or precept of religion can be strictly called new. I only mean, that when the subject of discourse rarely receives a discussion from the pulpit, the examination of it may be considered as new to the congregation; they not having the same opportunity of becoming thoroughly acquainted with it as with some other topics, which if more momentous, are at the same time more trite. Perhaps the subject is one of those, against which we are sure, from the known character of the congregation, there are certain prejudices. A case of this kind requires a peculiar delicacy. A modest attempt to remove unfavourable prepossessions is in such a case extremely proper in the entry. Butler's sermon on the Love of God affords a very suitable example in this way. It deserves also to be remarked, that a preacher ought in the exordium cautiously to shun being so particular as might anticipate what should be advanced afterwards; that he ought here to proceed on such principles as are generally, if not universally, admitted; such as approved maxims, incontestible observations; otherwise its obscurity will rather avert than attract the attention of the audience. And if in order to prevent this obscurity, one should fall into a train of reasoning, or be at particular pains to explain and illustrate the principles advanced, it is manifest this conduct would convert into a real discourse, what ought to be no more than a prelude; it would extend the introduction to an undue length, and so far from answering the design of preparing the hearers to receive with attention the discussion of the subject, it would tend to make them lose sight of it altogether, by engaging them deeply in different

though related questions. In regard to the language of the introduction, it ought to be, in a particular manner, perspicuous and distinct. There is rarely scope in the introductory part of any kind of sermons, and much less in that of an explanatory sermon, for rhetorical tropes and figures. But as the expression should be plain and clear, the sentiments ought to be striking and almost self-evident.

The next part that requires to be considered, after the exordium, is *the exposition of the text.* And here it ought to be observed, that no more of the context should come under the notice of the preacher, than what may serve to corroborate or illustrate the thoughts advanced in the introduction, or what may be of use for throwing light upon the text. It is often necessary to take for texts, passages wherein the thing spoken of, or what is closely connected with it, is expressed by a relative pronoun, in which there is a reference to what immediately preceded. The text in such cases is not intelligible but as it stands in connection with the foregoing words. Such a text for example would be that in Psalm. xix. 11. " In keeping of them there is great reward," where it is only from the context you can learn the import of the pronoun *them.* The same may be said of the possessive *his* in the following passage, which may be used as a text, 1 John v. 3. " His commandments are not grievous." But when the text itself is sufficiently perspicuous, and however closely connected, independently intelligible, and when the sentiments of the context do not happen to have any coincidence with those employed by the preacher for introducing his subject, it is by no means necessary to take any notice of the context at all. Nay it often

proves in fact rather a digression from the subject, than a constituent part of the discourse. Immemorial custom, I acknowledge, hath with us given a kind of sanction to this practice, as to many other improper ones; but it belongs to judgment and taste, to distinguish those cases wherein it is useful, and those wherein it is foreign to the purpose. And that is always to be held foreign, which however just and even profitable abstractly considered, nowise contributes to promote that which is the ultimate aim of the discourse. When the text, as in the two passages last mentioned, has a reference to the context, but at the same time there is nothing in the context, which is not as to its meaning perfectly obvious to an ordinary capacity, it will suffice barely to repeat such of the preceding verses as have the most immediate connection with the text. Sometimes indeed it will do better to give an abstract of the story or of the reasoning, of which the text is a part, and that, without particularizing any of the passages. But in the election to be made out of these different methods, it behoveth us of necessity to leave the preacher to the guidance of his own judgment. The choice depends on such a variety of minute circumstances as renders it insusceptible of rules. The text itself, if necessary, may be explained, either by a paraphrase or otherwise. If by a paraphrase, it should be simple and brief, and no more in effect than a mere explicit declaration of the subject of discourse. If a looser method of expounding the passage is preferred, this exposition ought to terminate in a sentence, distinctly proposing the doctrine or duty to be explained.

The next thing that comes to be considered is *the partition*, or as it is more commonly termed the division of the subject into its constituent branches. And here doubtless the logical rules ought to be inviolably observed. The partition ought to exhaust the subject, insomuch that no part be left uncomprehended, and it ought to extend no farther, so as to comprehend any thing else. And as far as is possible in a consistency with these, a natural simplicity ought to be studied in this part in particular. Nothing harrasses the memory of the hearers more than a multiplicity of, what is called, the heads or chief topics of discourse. As where there is any partition of the subject they cannot be fewer than two, they never ought to exceed four or five. These for the most part ought in explanatory discourses, which are directed solely to the understanding, and which should preserve an appearance of accuracy and precision throughout the whole, to be very explicitly laid before the hearers. As an instance of a just partition, that given by Dr. Tillotson of the nature and extent of gospel obedience, may serve for an example. The properties of such an obedience, he divides into these three, sincerity, universality and constancy. This division is taken from the essential qualities of the subject; it may sometimes be taken from the component parts. The preacher's design, I shall suppose, is to explain the duty of prayer, and from the consideration of the constituent members of his subject, he divides his discourse into three heads destined severally for the explanation of the three parts, *confession*, *petition* and *thanksgiving*. To these some improperly add a fourth, *adoration*, I say improperly, because this, so far from

being a distinct member, is necessarily implied in each of the others; in so much that none of them can be explained or conceived without it. Each implies the acknowledgement of the superintendency and perfections of God, and of our own dependency and obligations. Such a distribution therefore, in which adoration were made a separate member, would be as though one should divide an animal body into these four parts, the head, the trunk, the limbs, and the blood, which last is manifestly essential to all the parts, and does not constitute a separate branch or member, as it pervades the whole and every part. This by the way may serve as a specimen of a faulty division. As to the order, in which the different branches ought to be proposed and treated, that is no doubt sometimes discretionary, but more frequently it may be determined by something in the nature of the subject. That which is simplest and plainest ought generally to be begun with: and from this we ought to advance to that which is less obvious and more complex; but of this more afterwards. So far I thought it proper to proceed in considering the general qualities, which affect the introduction, the exposition of the text and context, where an exposition of either or both is necessary, and the propounding of the subject and the method.

Before we proceed, it will be necessary to consider a little more particularly, in what manner the text and the subject ought to be adapted to each other. And here the first thing that necessarily demands our attention is, that the text ought to be chosen for the subject, and not the subject for the text. Nor will this observation be found, upon inquiry, of so little moment as at first sight it may appear to be. It is manifest from the

general taste and manner that has hitherto prevailed in preaching, that the text, rather indeed the words of a certain portion of scripture, hath been the primary consideration, and the subject at best but a secondary one. Or if it hath happened, that the subject hath been first thought of by the speaker, he no sooner deviseth a text, than he judges it necessary to attach to his principal subject certain other subordinate ones, suggested not by the sentiment conveyed but by the expressions used in the text. The consequence is, that there is hardly one sermon in a hundred, wherein that unity of design is observed, which constitutes one great excellence in every composition.*

I mentioned in the beginning of my last prelection, that the first thing that falls under the preacher's consideration is the subject. Unity I then observed was a principal requisite in the subject; but deferred stating the precise notion of it, till we should come to treat of that part of the discourse, which includes the declar-

* In prescribing tasks for trying the abilities of the students of theology, in instructing and persuading, it is the common practice to assign them a text on which to prepare a sermon. And this method I followed for some time. The consequence I found to be, that instead of one subject in a discourse we often heard discussed in one sermon two or three distinct subjects. I have therefore resolved instead of a text to prescribe a subject, leaving to the student to find out a proper text for himself; for example, some doctrine or precept of the gospel to be defined and illustrated in an explanatory sermon, or some duty to be inculcated or evil to be warned against in a suasory discourse. As this way of prescribing a subject gives a greater probability that unity and simplicity shall be preserved in the composition, than that of assigning a text, and as the subject ought always to be first in the intention of the composer, I have thought this method upon the whole greatly preferable.

ed design of the performance and the manner in which it is proposed to prosecute it. This will be somewhat different in the different kinds of sermons; I shall consider the unity of each, at least what is peculiar in each, in the explication of the kind. And as to that kind of which we are now treating, the explanatory, let us suppose one intending to compose a sermon in this way hath chosen for his subject, the doctrine of the Divine Omniscience. After searching for some time for a proper text, I suppose he determines to take Heb. iv. 13; which, though complex in the terms, is sufficiently simple in the sentiment. The words are, "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." It is a thousand to one he would judge it no other than a piece of justice to his text, to discuss a number of adventitious points, which, if without any text he had been required to explain the doctrine of the omniscience, he would never have dreamt to have any connection with his subject. Such as these for instance, to consider what is implied in the manifestation of a creature, or in its being naked and opened; in what respect these phrases may be used relatively, so that a creature may be said to be manifested, naked and opened to the eyes of one, which is nevertheless undiscovered, clothed and shut to the eyes of another: again, who is meant by the apostle in that expression, him with whom we have to do; and why God is so denominated. Yet will any one say, that these critical inquiries, which in a critical exercise on the passage would be very proper, I say not, necessary, but any wise conducive to the illustration of this simple proposition, God knoweth all things? And if

so, there can be no unity in the subject, nor simplicity in the performance, in which things so diverse are jumbled together. The only connection there is among them is not a natural, but an accidental, connection arising merely from the terms, in which the sentiment is expressed. Sometimes it is necessary to recur to such texts, because a simpler expression of the sense, though more eligible, is not to be found in the words of scripture. But then if there be any difficulty, it is sufficient to remove it by the way, in showing the import of the text, or in a brief paraphrase on the words, or even in a plain synonymous sentence. It must ever be remembered, that it is the leading sentiment conveyed in the text, which it is the preacher's business to illustrate, and not the terms or phrases by which it is conveyed. It is this difference that makes a principal distinction between every kind of sermons whatever, and that species of lecture which we called exposition, wherein the text is itself properly the subject, and not to be considered as a bare expression of the subject. Now it is this false taste in preaching which hath given rise to the censure formerly quoted from Voltaire, in as much as the speaker is not employed in the discussion of any one subject, but is, as it were, amusing himself and his hearers with a number of little independent dissertations on the different words, idioms and references which are found in a line or two of sacred writ. It will perhaps be urged, that there are few passages, which from the turn of the expression would lead the speaker into such devious tracks, as that above quoted; but in reality, where the same notion prevails in regard to pulpit composition, there can hardly be found a text so simple, as

will not afford some occasion for the same manner of treating the subject. Let us suppose that the preacher's subject is to explain this doctrine of revelation, that the grace of God is the genuine source of man's salvation, and let us suppose he chuseth for his text Eph. ii. 8. "By grace are ye saved." One more simple or more apposite is not even to be conceived. Yet the most general and approved way, in which, in many places, this theme at present would be managed, is the following. First, would the speaker say, I shall explain what is meant by grace; secondly, I shall show what is meant by salvation, or what it is to be saved: thirdly and lastly, the relation which one of these bears to the other, or the dependance of the latter upon the former. Methinks I hear it resound from every quarter, could there be a juster method, or one that more perfectly exhausts the text? No indeed if we are barely to regard the words; in which case it may be said to be three texts more properly than one. My intended subject was only one, but here we have no less than three. Ay but, say you, are not these three so intimately connected, that the one cannot be perfectly understood without the other? That they are indeed connected is very certain, but so also are all the doctrines and precepts of our religion. Is it therefore impossible to explain one without explaining them all? If so, every sermon ought to be a system, both of the tenets and of the duties of christianity. And as the christian system is only one, in this way there should be no more but one sermon. And as strange as it may appear, I have known preachers and very popular preachers too, whom I have heard frequently, and yet can say with truth, I never heard from them

but one sermon. The form, the mould into which it was cast, was different according to the different texts, but the matter was altogether the same. You had invariably the preacher's whole system, original sin, the incarnation, the satisfaction, election, imputed righteousness, justification by faith, sanctification by the Spirit, and so forth. As to the practical part, including the duties which our religion requires, whether it was, that it appeared more obvious or of less consequence, I cannot say, but it was very rarely and very slightly touched. The discourses of such people have often put me in mind of the clay, with which children sometimes divert themselves. The very same mass, they at one time mould into the figure of a man, at another into that of a beast, at a third into the shape of a bird, and at a fourth, into the appearance of a table or stool. But you are sure of one thing, that whatever be the change on its external form, its substance is unalterably the same. Yet these people argue with an apparent plausibility. Such a one explaining the character expressed in the words *pure in heart*, tells us that in order to understand it rightly, we must consider it in its source, the sanctifying operation of the Holy Spirit. The better to understand this, we ought to consider our previous natural corruption. This brings us directly to original sin, which makes it necessary to inquire into that original righteousness whereof it is the privation. And this being implied in the expression, *image of God*, leads us to the examination of the divine perfections. These again are best illustrated by the effects, the works of creation and providence, and especially the work of redemption. This method of arguing puts me in mind of a story told by Alembert

in an essay on the liberty of music. "Dioptrics," said a certain profound philosophical professor to his pupils, "is the science which teaches us the use of spectacles and spy glasses. Now these are of no value without eyes; the eyes are the organs of one of our senses, the existence of our senses suppose the existence of God, since it is God who gave us them; the existence of God is the foundation of the christian religion, we purpose therefore to evince the truth of the christian religion, as the first lesson in Dioptrics." I shall only say in general of this method, when introduced into the pulpit, that however acceptable it may be with the many, with whom sound always goes much farther than sense, and favourite words and phrases to which their ears have been accustomed, than the most judicious sentiments, I know no surer method of rendering preaching utterly inefficacious and uninstructive. To attempt every thing is the direct way to effect nothing. If you will go over every part, you must be superficial in every part; you can examine no part to any useful purpose. What would you think of a professor of anatomy, who should run over all the organs and limbs and parts of the human body external and internal in every lecture, and think himself sufficiently excused by saying that there is a connection in all the parts; and that the treating of one naturally led him to say something of another; and so on, till he got through the whole? Or, what would your opinion be of a lecturer in architecture, who in every discourse discussed all the five orders, and did not leave a single member or ornament in any one of them unnamed? From such teachers, could a reasonable man expect to learn any thing but words? The head

of the learner would, in consequence of this extraordinary manner of teaching, very quickly be stuffed with technical terms and phrases to which he could affix no definite signification. He might soon be made an accomplished pedant in these arts, but, to the end of the world, would not in this way be rendered a proficient. And do we not see among the common people many such pedants in divinity, who think themselves wonderful scholars, because they have got the knack of uttering, with great volubility, all the favourite phrases and often unmeaning cant of a particular sect or faction? It is indeed solely to be imputed to that jealousy, which party spirit and our unhappy divisions in religious matters have produced, that this futile manner owes its origin. In consequence of this party spirit, many hearers whose minds are unhappily poisoned with its malignity come to a new preacher with an anxious concern, not to be instructed but to be satisfied, whether he is what they call orthodox, is a true partizan and has the shibboleth of the party in him; and the preacher on the other hand, either because he hath imbibed the same sectarian spirit, or because he is more ambitious to please than to edify, takes this way, which is by far the shortest and the easiest, of ingratiating himself into their favour. But to return to the particular instance which gave rise to these observations, all that in regard to the two points *grace* and *salvation* is previously necessary to the explication of the only point, which makes the subject, is to observe in so many words, that grace means here the unmerited favour of God, and salvation deliverance from all that evil which is consequent on sin. And this may be sufficiently effected in the exposition of the

text, or in a paraphrase upon it. Nay, whatever further is of importance as to both these points, *grace* and *salvation*, will necessarily and more naturally occur, without doing any violence to the unity and simplicity of the discourse, in the illustration of the subject, which is purely to show in what respect divine grace is the genuine source of man's salvation. But would you have only one point? Where is then the distribution or partition of the subject, of which you spoke before? I would indeed have but one subject, though, where the nature of the thing will admit it, distributed for order's and for memory's sake into its different members, and then the several points in the division must appear as the constituent parts of one subject and one whole, and not as so many distinct though related subjects or wholes. Thus the forementioned subject may be illustrated under these two articles, which will make the heads of discourse: the plan itself of our redemption by the mediation of the Son is the result of grace or unmerited favour; the completion of it in us by the operation of the Spirit also the result of grace. Both these manifestly center in the same point; salvation springs from grace. But if ye must draw in every thing that is related, you can never have done, till you have made your sermon a complete system of christian divinity.

The method in making sermons, which for a long time hath carried the vogue in this country over every other, and which is considered as very simple compared with the more laboured and intricate methods formerly in use, is a division of every text, into what the schoolmen call the subject, the predicate and the copula. Thus, suppose the topic to be discussed were

the nature of the divine faithfulness, and the text 1 Cor. x. 13. "God is faithful;" this most simple and apposite passage would be divided into three heads. The first would be the divine nature, the second the attribute of faithfulness, and the third the connection between the two. This is not discoursing on the subject, but cutting the text into fritters, where if the subject come in for a share, it is much; often it is eluded altogether. But the impropriety, and if it were not for the commonness, I should say the puerility of this manner will appear better by applying it to other matters, in which the pulpit is not concerned. I shall suppose one hath it prescribed to him as the subject of an oration, an inquiry into the antiquity of rhime. Accordingly he goes to work, and having well weighed every word and syllable of the question, he thus lays down his plan of operations. First, says he, I shall consider what is implied in the word antiquity, and all the different acceptations of which the term is susceptible; secondly, I shall consider the nature, import and properties of what is called rhime; and thirdly, the relation in which the one stands to the other, or how far and in what respect the one may be justly predicated of the other. Could any one imagine that such a disquisitor understood the subject? Good people are sometimes offended at the application of the word eloquence to preaching. They think it savours of something merely human and too artificial. But the art of preaching, as in fact it hath been long taught and practised by the men, whom those people generally most admire, is the genuine offspring of the dialectic of the schools, and fifty times more artificial, or if you will mechanical, than that which true rhetoric

would inculcate. On the contrary, it is the business of the latter to bring men back from all scholastic pedantry and jargon, to nature, simplicity and truth. And let me add, that discourses on this plan will be found much more conformable, in manner and composition, to the simple but excellent models to be found in sacred writ.

LECTURE IX.

Of Explanatory Sermons....How the branches should be arranged and treated ....Of the Style....Technical Language to be avoided and that of Scripture preferred....Abuse of Scripture Style....Of the Conclusion.

In my last discourse on christian eloquence, I considered part of the explanatory sermon, which was begun with, as the simplest, to wit, the exordium or introduction, the proposing of the design with the explication of the text and context, where such explication is necessary, and the division of the subject. I should now proceed to consider in what method the branches of the division should be ranged, how they should be treated, and the properest way of forming the conclusion. As to the first, *the order* in which the principal heads of a discourse ought to be arranged, this is sometimes of considerable consequence, sometimes it is a matter merely discretionary. It is of consequence, when the knowledge of one part is, in its nature, prerequisite to the right understanding of another part; it is also of consequence, when in the order of time or of nature, the one part is conceived as preceding the other. The arrangement may be said to be discretionary, when neither of the above mentioned cases takes place. Suppose, for instance, the preacher's subject were the nature of evangelical repentance, and he were disposed

to comprehend the whole under the three following heads, a proper sense and conviction of sin, pious and suitable resolutions from an apprehension of divine mercy through the mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord, and a real conversion or change to the obedience of God. The order, in which these topics have just now been mentioned, is the only order in which the subject could properly be discussed. The right understanding of every previous member is preparatory to the right understanding of that which follows. This arrangement will perhaps be considered also as fixed by the order of nature and of time. I shall for another instance recur to that mentioned in a former lecture. Suppose then the preacher's subject is to illustrate this important evangelical truth, that grace or the unmerited favour of God is the genuine source of man's salvation; suppose further, that one chooses for the illustration of it the two topics also above mentioned; the plan of our redemption by Jesus Christ is purely the result of grace or unmerited favour, the completion of this plan in us by the operation of the Spirit is also the result of grace. It is evident, that the order in which these two topics are now laid down, is the only natural order in which they could be treated. The plan is ever conceived as previous to the execution. But in another example of distribution taken from Tillotson, of the characters of gospel obedience into sincerity, universality and constancy, it is not perhaps material in what order you explain these particulars. As there are few cases however, in which even this circumstance, when attentively considered, will appear perfectly indifferent, I should like best the order wherein I have just now named them, though I could not

deny, that in any order they might be treated with sufficient perspicuity. Indeed in the other instance also above mentioned of prayer, as divided into its constituent parts, petition, confession and thanksgiving, the order is perhaps as much discretionary, as in any example that could be produced. Again, as in the explication of the principal heads or topics, there may be scope for a subdivision, the same remarks will hold with regard to the arrangement of the constituent members of that subdivision. But as it is impossible, that one who himself understands the subject that he treats, should not perceive the dependance of the parts and consequently the natural order, where the subject gives scope for it, I should think it losing time to enter more minutely into the discussion of this point. I shall only further remark on the article of arrangement, that as a multiplicity of divisions and subdivisions is not only cumbersome to the memory, but savours too much of artifice and a kind of minute and finical precision, a speaker ought carefully to avoid it. Do not imagine, that by this I mean to recommend a rambling and desultory manner of treating a subject. Nothing can be farther from my intention. I know well the power of method for assisting both the understanding and the memory, and with how much justice Horace hath styled it *lucidus ordo*, as being that, which, of all qualities, tends most to throw light upon a subject. But though a just and natural order ought ever to be preserved in the disposition of the sentiments in a sermon, the formality of always proposing or laying down that order, especially in the subordinate parts or inferior branches of a dis-

course, is rarely the most eligible method for recommending what you say to the attention of the hearers.

Need I add, that in general in this kind of discourses the style should be remarkably simple and perspicuous. The immediate end is distinct apprehension. It therefore admits but few ornaments, sometimes indeed it will receive very properly a sort of painting or imagery, which seems more immediately intended to delight the fancy, but which seasonably enough relieves the minds of the hearers from too intense an application of thought, to what in itself may be called a sort of abstract truth, an application, of which the generality of hearers are very little capable; at the same time that it fixes their attention, and even conveys to them more distinct conceptions by a happy illustration of things less known by things familiar to them. Thus the great truths in relation to the kingdom of heaven were ever illustrated to the people by Him, whom we ought to regard as our pattern in teaching as well as in life and practice, by the common incidents and affairs of this world, with which they had occasion to be well acquainted. I would not however by this be understood to recommend so close an imitation of our Lord's manner, as to endeavour to convey every thing in parables and allegories. I am afraid, this might give scope for too close a comparison, which would redound greatly to the disadvantage of any modern speaker; besides, I must acknowledge that though in what concerns the matter, the great truths of religion remain invariably the same, yet in what regards the general manner of communicating them, the mode or custom of the country where we live, ought not altogether to be overlooked. In a re-

markable deviation from it, there is always the disagreeable appearance of affectation. The warmer and livelier manner of the orientals never fails to please us exceedingly in their writings; at the same time that it appears to sit very aukwardly on a modern European. It suggests the idea rather of mimicry, or a servile copying, than of a liberal imitation. Certain things in the manner of conveying instruction, as well as the words and phrases of the language that we employ, are in every age and nation dependant upon use, from which we cannot deviate far without becoming ridiculous. But there is sufficient scope for imitating the manner of our Lord, by a proper choice of similes and examples borrowed from things human, for assisting the apprehension of the people in things divine.

In regard to the manner of treating the different branches of the subject I shall only further add, that if there occur, on any of them, any difficulty arising either from the nature of the point to be discussed, or from misconceptions of the subject commonly entertained, or from any customary but wrong way of explaining it, such difficulties will generally be best obviated in the entry; I say, generally, because sometimes a simple and distinct explanation will make the difficulty entirely vanish, and at most it will require only one's remarking, as it were by the way, the misrepresentation that has been given, or the misconception that has been entertained of such a part of the subject. Let it serve also as a general rule in this kind of discourses, to avoid too great subtlety and depth in your explanations. The many controversies that have arisen in the christian church, and the parties and factions into which Christendom is unhappily divided

have amongst all of them, in less or more, given rise to a scholastic manner of treating almost every question in divinity, a manner extremely unsuitable to the simplicity of the sacred idiom, and the purpose of edifying a christian congregation. The same thing has also given rise to a sort of technical language in those matters, which is somewhat different, indeed, in every different sect, and too much savouring in all of the cobweb distinctions of schoolmen and metaphysicians, but very little of the wisdom which is from above. It is this which hath made preaching in many places degenerate into what the apostle terms, "doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth." I have often recommended, and can scarce sufficiently inculcate on all students in theology, to be more conversant with their Bible, than with the writings of any of the most celebrated divines, to whatever sect or party they belong, and to familiarize themselves to the style and sentiments of the former much more than to those of the latter. I am far from thinking, that we ought to reject the use of the latter altogether; but am clearly of opinion that the more assiduous and unintermitted study of the former should give an ascendent in our minds to the sentiments, to the turn of thinking, and even to the forms of expression when we learn them, and should serve as a proper check, to prevent our imbibing and adopting too implicitly, either in tenets or in style, the peculiarities of a sect.

Before I leave this article, I would also warn you against another fault, which is sometimes to be met with, and that is, using the scripture style itself in an

unmeaning manner. There are, especially in the prophets, it must be acknowledged, several passages, about the sense of which the most learned and judicious interpreters are divided; there are many more expressions, which are not intelligible at least to the common people, and even of many, that are quite perspicuous when considered as standing in connection with the context, such applications are often made, as convey either no meaning at all, or a very different meaning from that which is suggested by the same words as they are situated in scripture. This is turning the language of the Spirit itself, if not to a bad use, at least into mere cant and jargon, a practice exceedingly common in the theological writings of the last century intended for the use of the people, but not so often to be met with in the present age; except amongst a few, on whom the dregs of the fanaticism, conceited ignorance and factious spirit of the former seem entirely to have settled. The true origin of this abuse is an excessive tendency to the use of scripture phraseology, merely in the way of allusion. Let it be observed, that I do by no means condemn in the gross an allusive application of scripture phrases, when clear, when apposite, and when emphatical, as they often are, although we be sensible that the meaning, in which we employ them, does not coincide with that which they have in the sacred volume. Where they are not quoted in the way of proof, but manifestly adopted in the way of illustration, they produce nearly the effect of similitude, containing an implicit comparison between the event to which they originally referred, and that to which they are applied by the preacher. Besides, this method of applying, by way of allusion, pas-

sages of the Old Testament we find also frequently adopted by the writers of the New. Such an use therefore, we must declare in general, is not only allowable but often energetic. It requires however to be managed with the utmost discretion. *Corruptio optimi pessima* is even grown into a proverb.

There are two dangers, in particular, which here ought to be carefully guarded against. One is, that whilst we mean only to make an allusive application, we may not express ourselves in such a manner, as might seem to fix a sense on holy writ different from that of the inspired penmen. The other is, that we do not run into the obscure and enigmatic style, as is sometimes done through an excessive inclination to hunt after scripture phrases, tropes and figures, or after figurative applications of what perhaps was sufficiently plain in the literal and original use. Nothing can be more opposite to the nature and intention of the explanatory discourse than such a method. For however emphatical a clear and apposite allusion may be, nothing can have a worse effect, when the resemblance is but faint and scarcely discernible, for then the way of applying the sacred words inevitably appears, to the more judicious hearers, affected and far fetched; and though the imaginations of the more ignorant may be pleased, and their ears as it were tickled by the use of phrases, for which through habit they have acquired a veneration, their understandings are not at all enlightened. On the contrary the subject (though they may not be sensible of it; for those of this class are very prone to mistake words for things, and mere sound for sense) is more veiled and darkened to them, than it was before. A preacher who is ever on the scent (and

such preachers I have sometimes heard) for allusive scripture phrases, can express nothing in a simple, natural and perspicuous manner. He will exhibit to you the mental blindness of the unregenerate, by telling you, that they "see men as trees walking;" spiritual and temporal mercies he rarely fails to denominate, "the blessings of the upper and the nether springs;" in order to denote the assurance, which the church or christian community have of a triumph over all their enemies, he will tell us, "The shout of a king is among them, and he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn;" and to express I know not what (but I have myself heard the phrase adopted by preachers of this stamp) he tells us very pompously, "The king's goings are always to be seen in the sanctuary." Nay, what is worse, (but I remark it here only by the way) sometimes dark and indefinite expressions, like these, are converted into petitions and adopted in public prayer. Such will say, "may the shout of a king be amongst us; may his goings be seen in the sanctuary;" and many other such indefinite and dark expressions one has sometimes occasion to hear, where they are exceedingly unsuitable, in the public devotions; for though the speaker may himself affix some meaning to them, it is impossible they should be understood or applied aright by the much greater part of the audience. With respect to them therefore, he acts much the same part, as if he prayed in an unknown tongue. So much for the manner and the style in which the doctrines and the duties of our religion ought to be explained to the people. I shall only add upon the whole of this branch of the subject, as a general position that will never fail to hold, that

the surest expedient, that any person can devise, for preventing his explanation of his subject from being unintelligible to the hearers, is to be careful, in the first place, that he distinctly understand it himself. It was well said by a master in this valuable art, "Si rem potenter conceperis, nec animus, nec facundia in concione defutura sunt;" or in the words of Jerom, "Quia firmiter concepimus bene loquimur." We may safely pronounce, that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, where we find, in any writing, the thoughts to be darkly and confusedly expressed, the true reason has been, the dark and confused conceptions of the author. One ought therefore, before all things, to endeavour to be master of the subject which he explains, to range his thoughts properly and naturally, to have a distinct meaning to every expression that he uses, and to employ only such as he has reason to believe will be generally intelligible.

It remains only now, that in this species of discourse we consider the *conclusion*. And here, if not always, it will very generally be proper, to begin with a brief recapitulation of the articles discussed. This is of importance both for the better understanding of the subject, and for fixing it more firmly in the memory, and is almost indispensable when the subject happens to be complex. But this is the smallest and the easiest part of what in such discourses should constitute the conclusion. As in religion, the ultimate end both of knowledge and faith is practice, or, in other words, the real improvement of the heart and life, so every doctrine whatever is of use, either as a direction in the performance of duty, or as a motive to it. And the knowledge and belief of hearers

are no farther salutary to them, than this great end is reached. On the contrary, where it is not reached, where the heart is not bettered and the life reformed, they prove only the means of aggravating their guilt and heightening their condemnation. The doctrines of the unity and spirituality of the Godhead serve to point out the proper object of religious worship, and the nature of that worship which must be acceptable to God. The other doctrines concerning the divine attributes serve both for our direction in regard to the adoration and homage which we owe to Him, and also as motives to the duties of reverence, trust, love and obedience. The scripture doctrine, in regard to the positive institutions of religion, serves chiefly to direct us as to the manner and disposition, in which these institutions ought to be celebrated. The other doctrines of christianity are manifestly intended to be used, and are employed by the sacred writers as motives to a pious and christian life. How strongly does the doctrine of the mediation inforce the calls given in scripture to sinners to repentance? How powerfully does the doctrine of the influences of the Holy Spirit, rightly understood, tend both to excite us to assiduity and fervour in our devotions, and to animate our endeavours after moral perfection in the persuasion of this almighty aid? Need I suggest the practical use to which the doctrines of the resurrection, of the future judgment, of the final retribution, of heaven, hell and eternity so manifestly point? Nor can any thing appear more proper and natural, than such a manner of ending a discourse which, as to the substance of it, was addressed purely to the understanding of the hearers; in as much as it is incontrovertible, that the revelation

of these important truths delivered in the gospel was never intended to terminate in being understood and assented to, but in having a happy influence on the disposition of mind and whole behaviour. It was not given to gratify our curiosity, but to regulate our lives. Hence it is, that we find it so frequently in scripture joined with epithets and attributes expressive of this quality, a *most holy faith*, a *doctrine according to godliness*, and *sound doctrine*, *υγιαινουσα διδασκαλια wholesome instruction*, not (as the expression has been sometimes perverted by the bigoted retainers to a party) a precise conformity in phraseology and opinion to all the little captious particularities of the sect. It is impossible to conceive any thing more remote from the original signification of the word, *sound*. It is a term, which marks not the logical justness of a theory, but its beneficial tendency; it is not the truth of any notion which can denominate it sound, but the salutary influence it hath on human life, that which makes it serve as food and medicine to the soul. Whatever in divinity is void of such influence, like the far greater number of the metaphysical questions agitated among controvertists, whether true or false, is hollow and unsound, a barren insignificant speculation: whatever hath an opposite influence, (and such doctrines also have been broached) and tends to subvert the foundation of mutual love and obligations to the practice of virtue, is more properly termed poisonous. Nay the pure unadulterated tenets of the gospel have so direct and manifest a tendency to enforce sanctity of life and manners, that when any of them are treated of by the inspired writers of the New Testament, the subject is almost invariably concluded by such a practical appli-

cation. Thus the apostle Peter, (2 Peter iii.) after treating of the general conflagration, very naturally concludes, "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness;" and after taking notice of the new heavens and new earth, that shall succeed the present, he adds, "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace without spot and blameless." In like manner, the apostle Paul, after treating at some length of the resurrection, concludes the whole with this earnest exhortation, (1 Cor. xv. 58.) "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." It is almost only this part, which in explanatory discourses admits of warmth, and what may be called an address to the affections. A deep sense in the preacher of the importance of this improvement of every instruction which he gives, an affectionate desire of promoting the good of the people, and a zeal for the interests of religion and virtue are the only sure methods I know of, for qualifying him to address them suitably and efficaciously.

LECTURE X.

Of Controversial Discourses....Candour and Simplicity ever to be studied in the Defence of Truth.

I HAVE now finished the consideration of the explanatory sermon, which is of all the kinds mentioned the simplest, and approaches nearest to what in the primitive church was called *homily*. The end of it, as was observed, is to dispel ignorance and to communicate knowledge, and for this purpose it addresses the understanding of the hearers. The next in order is the *controversial*, addressed also to the understanding, its end being to conquer doubt and error and to produce belief. In other words, by the first it is proposed to inform the hearers, by the second to convince them. It is the second kind, which I now intend to consider, and shall endeavour to despatch, what I have to offer upon it in the present lecture. There are many observations, such as those regarding the unity of the subject, the choice of a text, the topics proper for the exordium, the explication of text and context, where necessary, which hold equally in all the kinds and therefore need not be repeated in the examination of each different kind.

In regard to the *unity* of the subject, I shall only observe, that here it admits rather a clearer definition or description, than perhaps in any of the others. A controversial sermon is then strictly one, when there is only one thesis, as I may call it, that is, one proposition, whether affirmative or negative, the truth of which it is the scope of the whole discourse to evince. Suppose a preacher should (in order to guard his people against some apparent danger of seduction; for, without some special reason of this sort, controversy is not eligible in the pulpit,) judge it necessary to maintain the lawfulness of infant-baptism; that which would constitute his performance *one*, is that the aim of the whole, and of every part, should unite in supporting this position, that it is agreeable to the gospel dispensation, that infants should be baptized. The thing might be illustrated by a thousand other examples, but it is really so plain in itself, that I could not consider it, as any other, than losing time to produce more instances.

In regard to the *text*, the same qualities are required here as in the former species, namely appositeness, simplicity and perspicuity. In regard to the first of these, the appositeness, let it be remarked here by the way, that it is not possible to find, on every subject, a text that has this quality in an equal degree. On some articles, the declarations of scripture are more explicit and direct; on others, not less certain even from scripture, the evidences at least in regard to the mode of expression are more implicit and indirect. I may observe also that we are not to understand this quality of *apposite* so strictly, as to suppose, that by the text we should discover whether the intended sermon is to be

explanatory or controversial. This is hardly ever to be expected. The text John iv. 24, "God is a spirit," is simple, perspicuous and apposite, either for an explanatory discourse on the nature of the Divine spirituality, or for a controversial discourse, whose aim is to evince the spirituality of God. Nay in a course of preaching on points, which may be controverted, this method, especially by a pastor in his own parish, is sometimes not improperly adopted. His division of the subject accordingly, when he first enters on it, may be this, first to explain the doctrine of his text whatever it be, secondly to evince the truth of that doctrine. As however the tenour of these two different parts, from the nature of the composition fitted to each, is very different, it is commonly better to disjoin them, so far as to make separate discourses of them, though from the same passage of sacred writ, the explanation being the subject of the first, and the proof of the subject of that which immediately succeeds the other. But when the explanatory part may with sufficient distinctness be despatched in a few sentences, I should admit that both parts may conveniently enough, and without violating the unity of design, be comprised in the same discourse. Something extremely similar we find to have taken place sometimes in the judiciary pleadings of the ancients, which I observed to have an analogy, in point of form, to controversial sermons. When the law was either obscure or complex, a separate explanation of the statute was made to precede the arguments either for, or against the accused. And we can easily perceive the expediency of this method for throwing light upon the proof, and assisting the hearers in discerning the justness of the reasoning. A

similar manner we find recommended by the example of some of the best preachers, both in French and in English.

In the controversial sermon after the oxordium, and brief explanation of the text and context where necessary; the point of doctrine to be either supported or refuted, ought to be as distinctly, perspicuously and briefly as possible proposed, and then the method ought to be laid down, in which you intend to manage the argument. This method on different questions will be very different. When a controverted point is simple in its nature, and when there is only one opposing sentiment, which the preacher has to refute, the most common, and indeed the most natural method he can take will be, first to refute the arguments of the adversary, and secondly to support his own doctrine by proper proofs. On the first, his acquaintance with the adversary's plea must serve for a directory as to the method wherein he should proceed. Only let it be observed in general, that where one means honestly to defend truth and to detect error, he will ever find his account in employing the most plain and unequivocal expressions, and in exposing the ambiguities and indefinite terms, in which, it often happens, that the sophistry of the adverse party lies concealed. some of our theological disputes, and even some of those which have created the greatest ferments and most lasting animosities among christians, are merely verbal. These, as much as possible, ought to be avoided. Others, in which there is a real difference in opinion, as well as in expression, in the different sides, have nevertheless given rise to a deal of logomachy in the manner wherein they have been managed.

In most questions, what is of real weight in the way of argument on the opposite sides might be reduced to a very small compass. It will well become the assertor of truth, whose cause has the greater advantage, the stronger the light be, into which he brings it, to endeavour by clearing off the rubbish of mere cavils, ambiguous and indefinite words and phrases, to convey plain and determinate ideas to the hearers, and thus as much as possible to simplify the question. Then let him discuss severally, what is thought to be of most moment on the adverse side, avoiding to tire his hearers with too curious a minuteness of investigation, or to perplex himself with a needless multiplicity of topics. Another error in disputation, which is by far too common, is when one will admit nothing in the plea or arguments of an adversary to be of the smallest weight. That they have no weight may be the case sometimes, but it is not always so. And this extreme will ever, with the more judicious, savour either of blind zeal in the preacher, or of a total want of candour, which will rather create a prejudice against the speaker, in the minds of those who are intelligent and sensible, that he does not justice to the other side, than incline them to give a favourable reception to his arguments. It gives, besides, an appearance to the debate which savours much more of proceeding from a mind ambitious of the glory of victory, than concerned for the interests of truth. I have heard a disputant of this stamp, in defiance of etymology and use, maintain that the word rendered in the New Testament *baptize*, means more properly to sprinkle than to plunge, and, in defiance of all antiquity, that the former method was the earliest and, for many centuries, the

most general practice in baptizing. One, who argues in this manner, never fails, with persons of knowledge, to betray the cause he would defend; and though with respect to the vulgar, bold assertions generally succeed, as well as arguments, sometimes better; yet a candid mind will disdain to take the help of a falsehood, even in support of the truth.

After discussing the adversary's plea, it will be proper in the second place to enter on the proofs. If the point under examination is knowable by the light of nature, as if it regard the being and perfections of God, or the great obligations of morality, one topic of argument may not improperly be taken from the discoveries of natural reason, and on some points, like that of a future state of retribution, even the universal consent of mankind, and the earliest traditions, that have as yet been traced in any country, may not implausibly be pleaded. Sometimes ecclesiastical history will furnish a head of argument. This happens especially when the question relates to any usages or ceremonies that have obtained, or to the manner of celebrating any of the positive institutions. But the principal foundation of argument for the preacher will always be the sacred scripture. This is true whatever be the controverted doctrine, since in order to entitle it to a discussion from the pulpit, it ought to be a doctrine in which the faith or morals of a christian are concerned. If the tenet maintained be purely a point of revelation, the scripture is in a manner the preacher's only ground, on which his reasonings can be built. From this also different topics of argument may be raised, either from different passages, or from the different lights in which

it is in holy writ exhibited, as suits the nature of the subject.

In arguing from the divine oracles, great care ought to be taken that we quote and interpret them candidly; in other words that we give always what, according to the best of our judgment, is the real sense of the sacred author. Preachers, I know, will sometimes make a very plausible appearance of supporting their side of the question by a passage of scripture, which in the detached way wherein they quote it, appears very favourable, but which, taken in connection with its context, means something totally distinct. For my own part, were the doctrine meant to be defended ever so truly a scriptural doctrine, I could not approve an attempt to support it by such a misapplication of holy writ, and consequently by misleading the hearers in regard to the sense of particular portions of scripture. This is like bringing people to submission to magistracy, by perverting the sense of the law; and though a person may be fighting in a good cause, one, who takes this method, fights with illicit weapons. If it be safer to be under God's direction, than under any man's, it must be safer to exhibit to the people the sense of the sacred oracles purely and candidly, leaving it to them to form the conclusions and make the application. This I take to be preaching not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves the people's servants for Jesus's sake. The contrary method is indeed preaching ourselves, it is abounding in our own sense, and even wresting the word of Christ to render it subservient to our opinions. I would not by any means however be understood to pass so severe a censure on the misapplication of a passage of scripture

arising from a mistake of the sense, a thing to which the wisest and the best are liable, but only on an intended misrepresentation of the true meaning, in order to make it serve as evidence of a point we are maintaining. That I may be better understood in the aim of this remark, I shall produce an example in the way of illustration. In support of this doctrine, that whatever is done by unbelievers, even those actions which are commonly accounted most laudable and virtuous, are of the nature of sin; it has been sometimes very gravely and very confidently urged, that the apostle says expressly (Rom. xiv. 23) "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Yet this expression (however apposite it may appear, when cut off from the passage with which it stands connected) has not the remotest relation to that famous question. When recourse is had to the apostle himself, and the occasion of the affirmation, we find it is brought in the conclusion of his reasoning, in regard to a point much disputed in that early age of the church, the observance of a distinction in meats and days. And though the apostle explicitly declares his own conviction, that no kind of meat is in a religious view unclean of itself, yet he is equally clear, that to him who esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean, because he believes it to be so. Hence he justly concludes, that he who doubteth is liable to condemnation, if he eat; because he acts against the dictates of his conscience, even though a misinformed conscience, he himself not believing that he does right, "for," he adds, "whatever is not of faith is sin;" whatever action is not accompanied with a belief of its lawfulness, is so far criminal, as it shows in him, who commits it, a presumptuous disposition

to violate the rights of conscience. But this has not the least reference to the belief of the principles, tenets or doctrines of christianity; but merely of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of certain actions. It deserves also to be remarked, that, in the matter discussed by the apostle, it is of no consequence, for rendering the action virtuous or vicious, whether the things believed be true or false, but barely that they be believed, and that our practice be conformable to our belief. To act against conviction or belief, he tells us, is a sin, to forbear acting in such a case is a duty, even though the thing believed be a falsehood. Nay it is, in fact, against what he himself acknowledgeth to be an erroneous faith, that he declares the man justly condemnable who acts. Now when such a perversion of the sacred text, as I have been illustrating, is made knowingly by the speaker against his better judgment, it is without doubt what the apostle calls "handling the word of God deceitfully," even though the sentiment, in support of which it is produced, be a true sentiment and conformable to the doctrine of Holy Writ. There is a candour and simplicity, which ought ever to attend the ministry of religion, not only in regard to the ends pursued, but in regard to the means employed for the attainment of the ends. Castalio in the defence of his Latin translation of the Bible against Beza, who had attacked him with a virulence which savours too much of what, not greatly to the honour of polemic divinity, has been called the odium theologicum, amongst other things mentions an accusation, for translating the third verse of the first chapter of Genesis in this manner, "Jussit Deus ut existeret lux, et extitit lux, God commanded that light should be,

and light was." And the reason of Beza's animadversion is, that in his opinion, Castalio had, by so doing, suppressed an important argument for the trinity. "Moses," says Beza, "purposely used the verb *amar said*, that he might indicate another person in the Godhead distinct from the person of the Father, and from the person of the Holy Ghost, namely the Son of God, by whom the whole series of creation was enunciated. The evangelist John, taking occasion hence, calls him λογος the word, and proves him to be God, and to have been in the beginning with God. But this man, (meaning Castalio) excluding the verb *said*, in which the greatest moment and principal weight is placed, expresses only in his version the signification of the verb *ihi fiat*." Thus far Beza; in which remark if he was sincere, as we are bound in charity to believe, it is impossible, whatever his erudition and other talents might be, to think otherwise than meanly of his skill in criticism. I own at the same time that I like the common translation, "Dixit Deus, Fiat lux, et facta est lux;" much better than Castalio's, and that, not indeed for Beza's reason, which is no reason at all, but merely, because it is more conformable to the simplicity and dignity of the original. Castalio's answer to the above charge, though it would perhaps be thought too ludicrous for the seriousness of the subject, justly exposes the absurdity of his antagonist. "Hæc sunt illius verba, quibus nihilo aptius argumentatur, quam si quis ita dicat. Moses in illis verbis, *Dixit serpens feminæ, cur vobis dixit Deus*, &c. data opera usus est verbo *amar, dixit*, ut alteram in diabolo personam distinctam a persona patris, et a persona spiritus impuri, nempe filium diaboli insigniret;

nam certe simillima est locutio." He subjoins this sentiment, in which every lover of truth will cordially agree with him. "Ego veritatem velim veris argumentis defendi, non ita ridiculis, quibus deridenda propinetur adversariis." How much more modest, in this respect, was Calvin, whose zeal for the doctrine will not be questioned, than either Beza or Luther? This last had exclaimed with great vehemence against both Jews and antitrinitarians, for not admitting that in these words, in the first verse of Genesis, *God created, bara Elohim*, there is contained a proof of the trinity, because the noun, signifying *God*, in the Hebrew has a plural form, though joined to a verb in the singular. Calvin on the contrary refutes this argument, or quibble rather, at some length, and adds judiciously, speaking of this expression, "Monendi sunt lectores ut sibi a violentis ejusmodi glossis caveant." I remember once to have heard a sort of lecture, on the miraculous cure of Bartimeus's blindness, from perhaps the most popular preacher, I cannot add the most judicious, that has appeared in this island in the present century. From these words of the blind man, addressed to Jesus, who had asked him, what he would have done for him? "Lord, that I may receive my sight," the preacher inferred not only the divinity of Jesus Christ, but Bartimeus's faith in this article. "He could not," said he, "have given him the appellation *Lord* Κυριε, had he not believed him to be God." And yet Mary gave the same appellation Κυριε to Jesus, when she took him for no higher person than a gardener. The same appellation was given by the jailor to Paul and Silas, the prisoners under his care, Κυριοι. In the first of these places our transla-

tors have rightly rendered it *Sir*, in the second *Sirs*. Indeed it is notorious, that both in the Greek version of the Old Testament and in the New, the word, like *Dominus* in Latin, or *Signore*, in Italian, is applied indiscriminately, as a term of respect to God or to man. I own I could not help concluding in my own mind from the remark, Either you must be exceedingly ignorant in regard to the book you pretend to explain, or you treat sacred writ with a freedom and artifice, that suit better the subtlety of the Jesuit, than the sincerity of the christian divine. If a man wanted to render truth suspicious to people of discernment, I know no better way he could take, than to recur to such cavils in order to support it.

But to return to the method of treating the proofs, from which, I am afraid, I shall be thought to have digressed too long. I observed on entering on this article, that when the controversy is reducible to one simple point, and when there is only one opposing sentiment to be refuted, the preacher might make the refutation of objections the first head of discourse, and the defence of the doctrine proposed the second. And if nothing can be said, in refutation, but what will naturally find a place in treating his argument, there is no necessity that the discourse should be divided into separate heads. One conclusive argument in many cases, is as good as a great number; for every part does not admit variety. Nor ought a division into different heads to be considered as a thing indispensable. Sometimes indeed when there is but one argument, it will very properly admit a division, as the conclusion rests on two propositions called premises; when neither of these can be said to be self-evident, it may be

made the subject of the first head, to support one of the premises, and of the second, to support the other. I shall borrow an instance from a late attempt of my own in this way, as no other at present occurs to my memory. The design was to evince the divinity of our religion from the success of its first publishers. The argument stood thus. "First, the natural means originally employed in propagating the gospel, were utterly inadequate, and must have proved ineffectual, if unaccompanied with the divine interposition. Secondly, the means employed were however eminently effectual beyond all example before or since. Consequently they were accompanied with a divine interposition, and our religion is of God." But every argument does not admit this division; for often one of the premises is either self-evident, or which amounts to the same, received by those against whom we argue. On the contrary, when the subject is complex and the opinions of the adversaries various, it will be better not to make a separate head of refutation, for where there are many jarring sentiments to be set aside there is a danger of distracting the mind by multiplicity. Let the truth be defended by arguments distinctly explained, and enforced, and in doing this, especially when the topics are drawn from holy writ, occasion may be taken of refuting the contradictory glosses or expositions of the opponents as you proceed. In this the preacher ought to consult carefully, what will give most simplicity and perspicuity to his reasoning. Further, a question is sometimes capable of being divided into two, or more, distinct though intimately related questions. In that case the heads of discourse may be the examination of each. When

the arguments are numerous, it is better to class them under a few general heads or topics for the sake of memory, as those from reason, those from scripture, and the like.

As to the arrangement of the arguments, there may sometimes be in them a natural order, as when a right apprehension of one is previously necessary to the full conception of another. When they are not of this kind, the speaker ought to consider the disposition of his hearers. If their prejudices rather oppose his doctrine, he would need to begin with what he thinks will have the greatest weight with them, lest otherwise, by introducing the debate with what they shall think frivolous, he should disgust them in the entry, and avert their attention from what he has further to offer. In general, rhetoricians have recommended to begin and end with the strongest arguments, and throw the weakest into the middle. It is as important, that you should leave a good impression on their minds in ending the debate, as that you should bespeak their favourable attention by what is of consequence in the beginning. They would have the orator act, in this respect, like the experienced commander, who puts his weakest troops into the middle; for though he has not the same dependance on them, as on those in the front and the rear, he knows they are of some use by their number, and add to the formidable appearance of his army.

The *conclusion* here may very properly be introduced by an abstract or recapitulation of the argument, followed with a suitable improvement of the doctrine proved. There does not seem to be any material difference, in what constitutes a fit conclusion to an ex-

planatory discourse, from what would suit a controversial one. Doctrine is the general subject of both discourses. In the one it is explained, in the other it is proved. The direct aim of the first is knowledge, but then the conviction or belief is taken for granted. The direct aim of the second is conviction. In both, the proper application is the influence which the knowledge and belief of such a truth ought to have on our disposition and on our practice. Perhaps in the conclusion of controversial discussions, it might not be amiss to offer some observations with a view to moderate the unchristian animosities, which differences on these articles sometimes occasion among those, who all profess themselves to be the disciples of the same Master, and to shew in general that error is more properly a ground of pity than of indignation.

LECTURE XI.

Of Commendatory Discourses, or those addressed to the Imagination.

We have now discussed the discourses addressed to the understanding, those two especially, the explanatory, whose end is information, by dispelling ignorance, and the controversial, whose end is conviction, by vanquishing doubt or error. I come now to that species which is addressed to the imagination. For as one way, and indeed a very powerful way, of recommending religion is by example, it must be conducive to the general end of preaching above mentioned, to make it sometimes the scope of a sermon, to exhibit properly any known good character of a person now deceased, by giving a lively narrative of his life, or of any signal period of his life, or an account of any particular virtue, as illustrated through the different periods of his life. For performances of this kind, the history of our Lord affords the richest fund of matter. In like manner, the lives of the saints recorded in scripture, the patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles and the martyrs, such at least with which, from the accounts given in holy writ, we have it in our power to be acquainted, make very proper subjects. Add to

these, deceased persons eminent for virtue and piety, whose characters are well known to the people addressed. Panegyrics of this kind on departed friends were more in use formerly, and commonly distinguished by the name of funeral orations. As praise of this kind was however sometimes prostituted, and as the usage itself in certain circumstances exposed the preacher to the temptation of making a sacrifice of truth from motives of interest, it is perhaps, upon the whole, no disadvantage to the ministerial character, that the practice is, in this country, almost entirely laid aside, and that we are now very much confined in this respect to the examples which the sacred canon presents us with. Now to do justice to the respectable qualities and worthy actions of the good, is to present the audience with a beauteous and animated pattern of christian excellence, which, by operating on their admiration and love, raiseth in their minds a pious emulation. That we are, without attending to it, induced to imitate what we admire and love, will not admit a question. It might not want its use, though scripture hath not afforded here so large foundation or so ample materials, to delineate sometimes, in proper colours, the conduct of the vicious, with its natural consequences, in order to excite a proper degree of horror and detestation against vice. But this, it must be owned, would require to be handled still more tenderly. It is our duty to love and esteem the virtuous, but not to hate and abhor the vicious. Our hatred and abhorrence ought to be pointed only against vice, but not against the persons addicted to it; whom, in pity, we ought rather to study to reclaim. And though the individuals themselves should be dead, and con-

sequently in this respect beyond our power, whatever bears the odious appearance of calumny and personal invective is quite unbecoming the pulpit. Exhibitions in either way from the pulpit form that species of discourses, which falls under the third class above enumerated. They are addressed to the fancy, and their scope is to promote piety and virtue by insinuation, that is by the gentle but efficacious influence of example. Discourses of this kind were distinguished among the ancients by the name *demonstrative;* but as that word in our language is rather equivocal, I have chosen to denominate them, *commendatory*, from the purpose to which they are most commonly applied.

In regard to the choice of a *text*, as there is here sometimes greater difficulty of uniting all the qualities, which were formerly mentioned, as characteristical of a proper text, greater indulgence must be given. At any rate, let it be perspicuous and expressive of the happiness or amiableness of a well spent life, or of those virtues which the discourse itself will give principal scope for extolling. An appositeness to the individual person, who is the subject of the sermon, when it is a funeral oration, cannot be had, and therefore, an appositeness to the character is all that can be sought. When the person, who is the subject, is one of the scripture saints, it is better to choose for a text some passage, wherein he in particular is spoken of. As to the introduction or *exordium*, there does not seem to be any thing very special requisite in this kind. The common qualities that ought to affect introductions in general have equally place here. They should be calculated to render the hearers attentive, docile and benevolent.

With regard to the *explanation of the text and context*, unless they could in some way contribute to the illustration of the character, which is the subject of the eulogy, it were better not to attempt it. If the text be sufficiently perspicuous and apposite, there can be no necessity, and there is no sort of discourse to which any thing, that has the remotest appearance of verbal criticism, is worse adapted than to this. The design of the sermon should be proposed with simplicity and distinctness. One may add the mention of the method, in which it may be thought proper to prosecute the subject, unless it shall appear to be so simple and natural, as to render even the bare intimation of it superfluous.

As to the *method* in which the different parts should be *digested and arranged*, that may be different as suits the particular taste and talents of the speaker, or as suits best the materials he hath to work upon. All the methods that occur to me for treating subjects of this kind, may be reduced to the three following. First the order of time may be followed. This method I shall call the *historical.* If this be the disposition adopted, there can be no question as to what should precede and what should succeed in the discourse. If there be much ground to go upon, it may not be amiss, for the ease of the memory, to divide the life you are to recommend as a pattern, into certain distinct periods, proposing to consider each severally in its order. If the materials you are supplied with for this purpose are not very plentiful, or if, whatever has been remarkable in the person's life which can be of any service to you, is comprised within a narrow compass of time, it will be better to follow the natural order, without using

the formality of proposing it to the hearers, or dividing the discourse into separate heads, for this ought never to be considered as absolutely necessary. The *second* method of arrangement is, by considering separately the most eminent virtues displayed in the life you propose to recommend to the admiration of your hearers. This I shall call the *logical* method. Suppose the subject, for example, were the life of Jesus Christ, and one were inclined to divide the virtues thereby illustrated into three classes, those which have self for the immediate object, those which have other men, and those which have God. The greatest objection I know of, that lies against this method, is that it generally occasions frequent recurring to the same actions and events, in which different virtues may have been illustrated. This, unless managed very dexterously, will have the appearance of tiresome repetitions. But to return to the example given of the life of Christ. Each of the heads above named may be illustrated through all the different periods of his life, or they may be subdivided into inferior branches. For example, the first of these, the duties a man owes to himself, may be understood to imply the virtues of humility, temperance and fortitude; humility or a superiority to pride and vanity; temperance or a superiority to appetite; and fortitude or a superiority to fear. But such subdivisions are not often convenient, in as much as they commonly tend more to burden than to assist the memory. If the preacher were to make one of the general heads only, the whole subject of one discourse, such a division of that head would be very proper. But if the whole example of Christ is the subject of a single discourse, the case is very different. Subdivi-

sions for the greater part ought to be avoided. The sort of discourse, to which they seem most adapted, is the explanatory, whose principal excellence appears to be in perspicuity and precision. Let it be observed however, that the method implied in a subdivision may often be conveniently followed, when it is not in so many words proposed. A *third* method, that may be employed in panegyrical discourses, as when two or three memorable events or actions are the sole fund, from which all the materials employed by the encomiast must be derived, is to illustrate the virtues displayed in the person's conduct on these several occasions, as the separate heads of discourse. And this method may, for distinction's sake, be denominated, the *dramatical.* As to the manner of prosecuting the design through all its different branches, I do not intend to enter into particulars. It is not my purpose to give a full institute of eloquence, but only to apply to the pulpit, as far as they are applicable, the general rules laid down by the ancients, referring you to their writings for the illustration, and particularly to remark to you the differences which the very different nature of the subject, of the occasion, of the end, of the character, to be supported by the speaker, and of the character of the audience, should give rise to. Now it must be acknowledged, that no sort of discourse from the pulpit hath so close a resemblance in respect both of the subject and of the end, and sometimes also of the occasion, to the judicial and deliberative orations, as this sort of encomiums hath to the demonstrative orations of the ancients. To their institutes therefore, I must refer you for more particular information. It is not my intention by these lectures to supersede the

study of ancient critics and orators, but only to assist you in applying their rules and examples to cases so different from those with which alone they were concerned. I shall therefore in these discourses, insist chiefly on what is different and peculiar in the eloquence of the pulpit.

And here, one of the first differences that offers itself to our observation, is, that the ancients had a much wider range in what might properly be made the subject of their praises. Pedigree, intellectual abilities, even qualities merely corporeal, such as beauty, health, strength, agility, nay those commonly called the goods of fortune, as riches, friends, rank, all came in for a share in the encomium. I do not deny that any of these may passingly be mentioned in a sermon, but it would ill become the dignity of the sacred function, to enlarge on these qualities in such a manner, as to seem to place a merit in things, which are totally independent of our will, and of which therefore the commendation in another can be of no service to a hearer in the way of example; but may, on the contrary, very readily do hurt in teaching him to place an undue value on things not in his power, and about which, as a christian, he ought not to have the least anxiety. Nothing therefore must appear to be the subject of panegyric to the preacher, but moral excellence. Nothing ought to be enlarged on as a topic of discourse, but what can properly be held up to the audience as a subject, which it is incumbent on them to imitate, in other words, as the object of a noble emulation. I acknowledge, that those other qualities, accidental in respect of us, as I may call them, which have no necessary connection with virtue or religion, and are only

physically good, may find a place in a discourse of this kind, when they are introduced not for their own sakes, but as it were, in passing, and in order to set off real virtues. Thus the high birth of the person, you extol, may be mentioned in order to add the greater lustre to his humility; his riches may be taken notice of by the way, in order to shew how well he understood the proper use of wealth, and in order to set off to the greater advantage how moderate he was in regard to gratifications merely personal, and how liberal and charitable in supplying the wants and contributing to the accommodation and comfort of others. It will be easily understood, that in the same way, almost every such advantage of person or fortune may be introduced. This would not be to exhibit wealth or nobleness of birth, as an object calculated to excite the ambition of the hearers, a thing exceedingly absurd in any, but more especially in the preacher of the humble religion of Jesus; but it would be to give an instructive lesson to the rich and noble, in regard to the use they ought to make of these advantages. It must be owned, on the other hand, that qualities physically bad may be rendered instrumental for the same purpose of giving higher relief to the virtues of the character. Thus the poverty of the person may serve greatly to enhance and recommend his patience, his contentment, his resignation, his prudence, his economy, nay even his charity and beneficence. In like manner, low birth and want of education may be made subservient to display to more advantage the industry and application of mind, which could surmount these signal disadvantages so perfectly, that the defect could never have been discovered from his behaviour and conver-

sation. And of this kind, we should say, as of the former, it is not recommending poverty and inferiority in point of birth to our estimation, but it is exhibiting a pattern to the poor and ignoble, whereby they may be instructed, how to convert such apparent evils into real occasions of improving their virtues, and of rendering these more than a sufficient compensation for every want. The ancient rhetoricians, though not so delicate on this point as christian teachers ought to be, were yet sensible, that this was the best use that could be made of fortuitous advantages or disadvantages. Thus Quintilian " Et corporis quidem, fortuitorumque, cum levior, tum non uno modo tractanda laus est. Interim confert admirationi multum etiam infirmitas, ut cum Homerus, Tydea parvum sed bellatorem dicit fuisse. Fortuna vero cum dignitatem affert (namque est hæc materia ostendendæ virtutis uberior) tum quo minores opes fuerunt, eo majorem benefactis gloriam parit." The following sentiment is indeed excellent, and well deserves our attention. " Sed omnia quæ extra nos bona sunt, quæque hominibus forte obtigerunt, non ideo laudantur, quod habuerit qui eas, sed quod his honeste sit usus. Nam divitiæ et potentia et gratia, cum plurimum virium dent in utramque partem, certissimum faciunt morum experimentum : aut enim meliores propter hæc, aut pejores sumus."

In regard to this species of discourse, as the immediate object is to please by presenting to the imagination a beautiful and finished picture in suitable colouring, it admits, from the nature of it, more of ornament, than any other kind delivered from the pulpit. There are few of the tropes and figures of eloquence, that may not properly find admission here. This is a kind

of moral painting; and greater allowance is made for introducing things which serve merely the purpose of decoration, when the immediate object is to delight. Here too there is generally more indulgence in point of style, than can be admitted in any other species of sermon. In respect of flowers and harmony, this kind borders even on the poetical. Yet still it must be remembered, that this indulgence hath its bound. Whatever soars above the reach of the congregation, whatever appears either unintelligible or affected, is still faulty and offensive. I observe further that in regard to the very ornaments, of which the different sorts of discourses are susceptible, such as metaphors, comparisons, examples, these in the thoughts, as well as in the language, should be different in the different kinds. In the explanatory, all the borrowed illustrations and similitudes ought to be from things familiar and simple, as well as exhibited in a distinct and easy manner. In the controversial kind the simplicity and perspicuity of the decorations, though still of consequence, are not so much regarded, as a certain forcible manner of impressing the imagination, so as to carry conviction along with them. The similes here ought to be all a kind of analogical argument. Again, in the commendatory discourses, whose end is neither to inform nor to convince, but to please, the principal quality in the fund of the imagery to be employed is its beauty. No metaphor, however like or apposite, ought ever to be admitted here, that is not taken from an agreeable object. Under the general term agreeable, I must be understood to comprehend, not only the beautiful strictly so called, but also the grand, the sublime, the wonderful and the new, if with these

qualities there be not connected any thing that is disagreeable, mean, ugly or deformed.

As to the manner of *concluding* discourses of this kind, any one, or two, or even all of the three following may be adopted, according as the preacher shall judge most suitable, to the time, the subject and the occasion. *First*, you may make out, from the actions and behaviour you have been delineating, a clear and distinct character of the person. Or *secondly*, you may introduce a contrast between the conduct of the person commended in some of the most memorable instances, and that which there is reason to believe would be followed, or which commonly is followed by the generality, even of professing christians, in the like circumstances. Or *thirdly*, you may conclude with a more direct application to the passions of the hearers, in order to excite in them a generous ardour to be themselves, what they cannot contemplate or behold without admiring. The first of these methods is far the most difficult. To draw a character, which shall be at once both just and striking, which shall set the different features in the most conspicuous point of view, that shall mark not only the exact turn of each, but the manner wherein they limit and set off one another, requires indeed the delicate hand of a master in the rhetorical art. It is attempted by every dabbler in historiography; but it is not one of a hundred that succeeds. Let it be observed, that a character thus introduced in the conclusion of a sermon of this kind, ought in every part of it to be manifestly supported by the particular actions and conduct delineated in the discourse, and should serve to recal to the memory and impress on it more strongly those particulars. As

to the manner, a good deal of care and attention is necessary. The prevailing taste at present seems to be, to give the whole in a string of antitheses, the great dexterity of which consists in this, to make the contrasted members come as near as possible contradicting one another, and yet escape being really contradictory. Very often they do not escape this. But though I do by no means blame the use of antithesis in drawing characters, a matter of particular nicety, in as much as in this way, when well executed, the precise boundaries of the different traits are more precisely ascertained, yet a continued train of this figure through successive sentences, however well it may pass in history, has by far too artificial and elaborate an appearance to suit the seriousness and the simplicity of the pulpit diction. As much conciseness, as can be rendered consistent with perspicuity, is very suitable here.

The second kind of conclusion mentioned, by a contrast between the conduct delineated and that of others, is often a very pertinent application of the subject, in as much as it makes the virtues of another serve as a mirrour to the hearers wherein they may discover their own vices and defects. It deserves only to be observed further on this article, that it is not necessary, that this part should be confined to the conclusion. When any thing noble, generous, humane or pious is illustrated in the discourse, as displayed on any signal occasion, it may very properly be contrasted with the conduct, either of any real character on record, or of what we know from experience to be the conduct of the majority of christians. And this may be done in any part of the discourse. It is only when the narrative is both very affecting, and excites such

an anxiety in the hearer for obtaining the sequel of the story and knowing the issue, that it is better not to interrupt the thread of the narration, but to reserve any intended contrast to the conclusion. When a contrast can be found in true history, it generally answers better, than when it is merely hypothetical, founded in common experience.

The third method of concluding, by an address to the passions of the hearers, is the most common. This may be either general and have a relation to the whole, or it may consist of two or more particular addresses, referring respectively to the different virtues celebrated, or to some of the most memorable actions related in the discourse. Thus much may be said in general of all these different kinds, that no observation made, or motive urged here can be called apposite, unless it have a manifest reference to, and be founded in the facts related and the virtues celebrated in some part or other of the body of the discourse.

I must further observe, that the pathetic is more easily attained, and that the transition to it appears more natural in the conclusion of a commendatory sermon, than in that, either of an explanatory discourse, or of a controversial. In these two kinds, during the whole tenour of the discourse, which is of a nature merely speculative, the understanding and memory only are exerted, as the whole consists either in explanations or in reasonings. This is rather unfavourable for emotion, and it requires a good deal of address to pass successfully from the one to the other. The mind cannot all at once from a state of perfect coolness, enter with warmth and keenness into the views of the speaker. It behoves him therefore, in beginning

such an address, to take up the point on the key, if I may so express myself, to which he knows their souls are at the time attuned, and gradually to work them up to that pitch to which he wants to bring them. If he act a contrary part, and break out all at once, with heat and violence, when they are perfectly cool, so far from operating on their affections, or influencing their will, he will appear to them like one distracted, who flies into a rage for he knows not what. No axiom is more important for bringing us to succeed in the pathetic, than this, that in addressing the hearers, we must enter with them on the subject in the same tone to which their minds are predisposed at the time to take it up in, and then insensibly work them up to ours. A prudent speaker, who perceives a coldness or indifference in his audience, will judge it necessary to disguise his own warmth, and to appear willing to canvass the matter as coolly as they can desire. If he succeeds thus in entering on it, and has the address for a little while to manage them, he may carry them at last, to what pitch he will. We have an excellent example of this kind of address, in the funeral panegyric, which Shakespear puts into the mouth of Antony, on his friend Julius Cæsar, immediately after his murder in the senate house.

But to return, I repeat the sentiment, as an important one, that nothing tends more strongly to make us deaf to what another says, than if he appear to be in a passion, when we are quite tranquil. Now the panegyrical discourses much more easily pass into the pathetic, than either the explanatory or the controversial. There is a near affinity between the moral sentiments, with the emotions they occasion, and the

passions and affections of the mind. The gradation is perfectly smooth and natural from approbation to admiration, from admiration to esteem and love, from esteem and love of the virtuous and praiseworthy, to detestation and abhorrence of the contrary dispositions, and from these to corresponding desires and aversions. The orator has only to take the advantage of this gradation, and that frame of spirit which the whole scope of the discourse was calculated to produce.

LECTURE XII.

Of Pathetic Discourses, or those addressed to the Passions. Of Persuasive Discourses, or such as are intended to operate on the Will.

I HAVE now gone through the explanation of the principal parts, of the three first kinds of pulpit discourses, the explanatory, the controversial, and the commendatory, and the rules to be severally observed in composing each. I come now to the fourth kind, the *pathetic*, or that which is addressed immediately to the passions, and which is specially intended to rouse the mind from a state of languor and indifference to the impressions of fervour and affection. The occasions of discourses for this kind with us, it must be owned, are not very frequent. For though in some of the other kinds, particularly in the persuasive, a great deal is addressed to the passions, yet these are, in that species of sermon, only employed as means to persuade to the particular practice or duty recommended. Whereas in the pathetic properly so called, the rouzing of suitable affections is apparently the ultimate end. I acknowledge, that the whole of preaching either directly or indirectly points to persuasion. But I denominate that only, the end of any species of discourse,

which is the declared and apparent end of the speaker. I have observed, that the occasions of discourses of this kind are few; there are however some. None is more remarkable or occurs oftener, than those calculated for disposing a congregation to a suitable commemoration of the sufferings of our Lord, in the sacrament of the supper, or Eucharist, as it is commonly named in Ecclesiastical History. I do not say however, that this is the only kind of discourse that is adapted to such occasions. By no means. If that were the case, as the subject of exciting the affections on such occasions is always the same, it would lay a minister in his own parish under the necessity of recurring so often to the same topics, as could not fail to prove tiresome to the majority of the hearers, and that though the things advanced by him were ever so good. An explanatory, a commendatory, or a persuasive discourse may also at such times be very pertinent. A little of the grace of novelty in form and manner, is exceedingly necessary for commanding the attention of the greater part of audiences. The only kind that I think ought to be excluded entirely from occasions of this nature, is the controversial. When the pathetic at such a time is made choice of, the preacher's aim is not to persuade the people to communicate. He supposes, that they have come to church with that intention. It is not to persuade them to the performance of any preparatory duty; all this he supposes to have been performed already. But it is to operate on all the grateful and devout affections of the heart, and to put his hearers, I may say, in a proper frame of spirit for discharging the duty for which they are assembled, in such a reverend and pious manner, as may produce the best effect upon their minds,

and tend most to the edification and confirmation of themselves, and others. The subject for this purpose may be more or less comprehensive, as the preacher shall judge convenient. Indeed, for the sake of giving a little variety to what does not, from its nature, admit a great deal, it may not be improper at different times to follow different methods; at one time, for instance, the subject may be the love of Christ as manifested in the whole scheme of redemption; at another, the same thing, as manifested in his sufferings and death. It is discourses of the last kind, which are commonly called passion-sermons.

In regard to the exordium or *introduction*, there will be less occasion for much art, when the solemnity of the time or the purpose of their meeting tends itself to rouse the attention of the hearer, and to supersede the address of the speaker. The topics for introducing the subject may then very pertinently be raised either from the intention for which the day was set apart, or from the nature and importance of the matter to be treated in the sermon. There is nothing peculiar to be observed in regard to the *explanation* of the text and context. If the discourse is intended merely to display the sufferings of our Lord, from his being betrayed into the hands of his enemies, to his death, the cruelty which was exercised upon him, and the meekness, piety and patience with which he bore it, it does not appear to be necessary, formally to lay down a method. It is enough in your narrative to follow the order of the history. In the manner of the exhibition, there will not be here a very material difference between that of the commendatory or panegyrical discourse and this of the pathetic. Only the latter admits less show

and ornament, and requires that we dwell longer on the most affecting circumstances. When the preacher's subject is such as doth not confine him within so narrow a compass, but affords an opportunity of expatiating on topics in themselves very distinct, but as it were concentrating in the tendency they all have to kindle the same affection in the breast; this common tendency gives a sufficient unity in discourses of this kind. The reason is obvious.

It may be remarked, that in this sort of discourses, more of the common textuary method may sometimes be followed, than any other species of sermon will properly admit. Thus suppose the text to be 2 Cor. viii. 9. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye, through his poverty, might be rich." The whole intention of the discourse being to stir up grateful and devout affection, these topics may severally and very pertinently be touched as tending all to the same important point. First, the consideration of the person, whose grace the apostle here celebrated, the Lord Jesus Christ who was rich. Secondly, the consideration of the persons, on whom this grace was bestowed, *you* (it was for your sakes) the posterity of fallen Adam, poor and helpless. Thirdly, the evidence and effect of his grace, "he became poor." Fourthly, the happy fruits and purchase of his grace, "that ye, through his poverty, might be rich." It is manifest, that each of these considerations, as it were, assists the other, all conspiring to kindle the warmest return of gratitude and love. Thus all pointing to one end, a grateful commemoration, gives unity to the discourse. Another instance of a text, which on such an occasion, and for

such a purpose, may very properly be divided in a similar manner, is that in 1 Pet. iii. 18. "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." This is all of the verse, that, in a consistency with the unity of scope and design, should be taken into the text. The subject, in effect, perfectly coincides with the former; and the distribution may be in other words the same. First, Christ the just. Secondly, us the unjust. Thirdly, "he suffered for sins." Fourthly, "that he might bring us to God." Each consideration severally enhances the obligation, and consequently the gratitude. In the manner of treating the different topics, one ought carefully to avoid all dry, minute, abstract and metaphysical explanations, as well as every thing, that may savour too much of argumentation and dispute. We are to remember, that this kind of discourse is very different in its nature and complexion, both from the explanatory and from the controversial. These are intended only to enlighten, but the other to warm. The view of the speaker, in these several topics in a pathetic discourse, is not to inform the hearers of what they did not know before, it is not to convince them of what they did not believe before; but it is to bring to their remembrance, truths which, though both known and believed, require often to be depicted in the most striking colours, that they may produce their congenial effect on the susceptible heart of the christian. It is manifest therefore, that cold and formal explanations, critical discussions, and abstract ratiocinations are here carefully to be avoided. A few lively strictures on the several heads, exhibiting all the principal considerations in the most glowing colours, are the surest way

of raising such images in the fancy, as not only will give a greater permanency to the perception of the truths themselves, but will make them more effectually operate on the passions. In discourses of this kind, there is less occasion also for a formal *peroration* or conclusion than in any other. The reason is, that whereas a certain application in the other kinds, of the points discussed in the body of the discourse, requires a particular address to the passions, there cannot be the same propriety of ending in this manner here, where the whole discourse is addressed to the passions. Something therefore, which in few words may serve to set the whole object full in view, to recall and infix the impressions already made, is all that is necessary in discourses of this nature.

I shall now, in the last place, consider the fifth species of discourse mentioned, that which was intended to operate upon the will, and which was denominated *persuasive*. Under this I include not only those sermons, whose end is to persuade to good, but those also which are calculated to dissuade from evil; for the structure and the rules of composition in both kinds are much the same. Here the distinguishing excellence results from a proper mixture of the argumentative and the pathetic, as it were, incorporated together. Let it be observed, that I use the word pathetic, in the largest acceptation, for whatever is fitted for exciting passion, affection or desire. The argumentative is necessary, because the intention of the speaker compriseth in it to convince the judgment, that is, for example, to satisfy me, that the conduct which you recommend, is agreeable to my duty, that it serves to promote my true interest, or is conducive to my hon-

our or my peace. The pathetic is also necessary, because the speaker's intention does not terminate in the conviction of the judgment, he intends also, and principally, by means of the judgment, to influence the will. To make me believe, it is enough to shew me that things are so; to make me act, it is necessary to shew that the action will answer some end. That can never be an end to me, which gratifies no passion or affection in my nature. In order to persuade, it is always necessary to move the passions. Passion is the mover to action, reason is the guide. Good is the object of the will, truth is the object of the understanding. It is only through the passions, affections and sentiments of the heart, that the will is to be reached. It is not less necessary, therefore, in the orator to awaken those affections in the hearers, which can be made most easily to co-operate with his view; than it is to satisfy their understandings that the conduct to which he would persuade them, tends to the gratification of the affections raised. But though both are really purposed by the speaker, it is the last only, that is formally presented to them, as entering into his plan. To express a formed purpose to work upon their passions, would be like giving them warning to be upon their guard, for that he has a design upon them. *Artis est celare artem.* Such a method, on the contrary, would be to lay the artifice quite naked, and thereby totally to defeat its end. The emotion with which they perceive him agitated, and the animation of his language, far from being the result of a deliberate settled purpose, ought to appear in him, the necessary, the unavoidable consequences of the sense that he has of the unspeakable importance of the truths

he utters, joined with an ardent desire of promoting the eternal happiness of them who hear him. It is not, therefore, here one part that is pathetic, and another argumentative; but these two are interwoven. The most cogent arguments are earnestly urged and pathetically expressed.

With regard to the whole of the introductory part, and explanation in this sort of discourses, I have nothing peculiar to remark. I shall only observe, that as to the *text*, it suits this kind better than any other, that it be in the form of a precept. I do not say however that this form is absolutely necessary. The end of the speaker may be, either to persuade to a christian life in general, or to the performance of any christian duty in particular. On the other hand, it may be to dissuade from a vicious course in general, or from the practice of any sin in particular. Nay further, it may be a persuasive or a dissuasive general or particular, either from all the motives that the nature of the subject will afford, or from one class of motives only. There is such a richness and variety in the motives, that may be urged, where religion is in the question, that in order to avoid being superficial, it may be very proper for a pastor amongst his own flock, as he has frequent opportunities of addressing them, sometimes to enforce the same duty from one set of motives, and sometimes from another. If the speaker's design be to comprehend in the same discourse, all the arguments which the nature of the subject admits, his text should be either a simple precept, wherein the duty is enjoined, or the sin prohibited, but no motive urged; or perhaps a simple proposition, wherein such a practice is barely pronounced right or wrong. If the intention is to per-

suade from one class of motives only, there should be something in the text, that points to these motives.

Thus in the first case, suppose the speaker's intention be to persuade to repentance from every motive which either reason or scripture affords, his text may be the simple command *Repent*, which occurs in several places of the gospel, or if he does not like one so brief, he may take these words of the apostle Paul, Acts xvii. 30. "God now commandeth all men every where to repent." But if he would persuade to repentance from the single consideration of its connection with the remission of sins, these words of Peter (Acts iii. 19.) will do better, "Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out;" for the words *be converted* are merely explanatory, and therefore do not render the sentiment complex, whatever may be said of the expression. Or, if the speaker's intention (which is near of kin to the former) be to persuade to repentance from this consideration, that future misery is the inevitable consequence of final impenitence, he may take these words of our Lord (Lu. xiii. 15.) "Except ye repent, ye shall all perish." To a christian life in general one may persuade from various motives. Suppose from the native excellence of genuine virtue or true righteousness, the text in that case may be Pro. xii. 26. "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour;" or from the present felicity to be found in the ways of religion, these words, Ps. xix. 11. "In keeping of them there is great reward," may serve as a text. Let it be observed, that such a text as this requires some explanation of the context, without which the subject is not to be understood, the matter spoken of being expressed

ly by a pronoun. When this is not the case, and when the passage adopted appears independent and perfectly intelligible by itself, it may stand for a general rule, that such explanations are better let alone, and deserve to be considered, but as a sort of digressions at the best. If the intention were to persuade to a good life from the consideration of the comfort it brings in trouble, and especially in the views of death, this passage might answer, Ps. xxxvii. 37. "Mark the perfect man and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace." Bourdaloue, a celebrated French preacher of the last century, persuades to the same thing from the consideration of the future happiness of the saints from these words of our Saviour, Lu. vi. 23. "Behold your reward is great in heaven." It deserves to be remarked, that there is here not only a reference to the context for the character or conduct to which the reward is promised, but that when ye do recur to the preceding words, they seem rather to refer to this in particular, the suffering of persecution and reproach for righteousness' sake. Yet as this itself is one of the noblest fruits and surest evidences of real sanctity, the choice cannot justly be deemed an inexcusable liberty. The reward is very properly considered, as ultimately to be attributed to that principle, from which the conduct flows. In persuading to particular duties, or dissuading from particular vices or temptations to vice, when the speaker intends (as it is not indeed so common here to confine one's self to one class of motives) to employ every argument of weight, which the subject presents to him, a single precept, briefly and plainly expressed, seems the most convenient choice for a text. If the design is to persuade

to the love of God, these words are proper, Matt. xxii. 37. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." If to the love of men, verse 39. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." These passages may, in like manner, serve as foundations for discourses explanatory of these duties. And as was remarked on the controversial sermon, we may observe here, that the minister in his own parish may, if he thinks it necessary, begin with a discourse explaining the duty enjoined or the vice prohibited, (if the text contains a prohibition,) and in his next discourse from the same words, make it his business to persuade them to the one, or dissuade them from the other. But in many cases it must be acknowledged, that such previous explanatory discourse is not necessary; the full import of the precept being perfectly level to every ordinary capacity. Thus if the subject were to dissuade from the vice of lying, a proper text would be these words of Paul, Col. iii. 9. "Lie not one to another." If against detraction, Ja. iv. 11. "Speak not evil one of another." In such plain cases, it must be owned, there would be little occasion for many words, and much less for a separate discourse, in order to explain the import and extent of the prohibition.

In regard to the method, however different the matter be, as something of the argumentative form must be preserved, the rules laid down in the controversial discourse may be of some use. One may begin, with showing the weakness of those pleas or arguments by which the dissolute, the vicious or the profane commonly defend their own conduct, and seduce others into the same track; and then produce positive argu-

ments or motives to influence his hearers to that conduct which he recommends. Or it may not be necessary, to make a separate article of the adversary's plea; a place, for whatever is requisite in this way, may be found by the preacher, as he proceeds in the support of his own cause. In this case the different topics of argument may constitute the heads of discourse. Bourdaloue, on the text above mentioned, proposed to persuade his hearers to a pious and virtuous life from the consideration of the recompense that awaits the just in the world to come. And from these three different qualities of that recompense, its certainty, its greatness, its eternity, finds topics of argument for influencing his hearers to a proper regard to it. And these three topics divide the discourse. In treating each, he contrasts that quality he is illustrating with something of an opposite nature ever to be found in the rewards or pleasures of sin, their precariousness in opposition to its certainty, their insignificancy in opposition to its greatness, and their transitoriness in opposition to its eternity. As to the method, in which the different topics are to be arranged, the same observations will hold that were made on the controversial discourse, and therefore shall not be repeated. The arrangement above mentioned seems to be the best in that particular subject, yet I could not say, it were absolutely necessary. You may begin perhaps with equal propriety with the greatness of the reward, as with its certainty; but in any case, it seems most fit, that you should conclude with the eternity. When the different motives are mentioned in the text, the preacher may very properly take notice of the different clauses, as the foundations of his different heads. But when they are

not explicitly mentioned, it savours of conceit and puerility to make them out by straining the words. This is a fault, into which the last mentioned orator, misled by the taste of the age and nation, frequently falls. Of the three topics aforesaid, only one can properly be said to be expressed in the text, namely the greatness; yet he finds something in the words to serve as separate foundations to the several heads. First, says he, I shall consider the certainty pointed out in the emphatic term with which the sentence is introduced, *Ecce*, behold. Secondly the greatness, *merces vestra multaest*, your reward is great. Thirdly, the eternity, *in cœlo*, in heaven. It may not be amiss to observe, that in making the transition from one topic or head of discourse to another, it will often prove very helpful to the memory, to point out in brief, how much you have already evinced, and what you are in the next place proceeding to evince.

As to the *conclusion*, it is very proper, first, to give a sum of the argument, in order to infix the whole more effectually on the minds of the hearers, and then more warmly to address the passions. If the preceding part has been suitably conducted, the people will be prepared for entering into the subject, with all the warmth that the speaker can desire. The way of practical inferences or speculative corollaries is not well suited to this kind of discourse. With regard to the first, the whole tenour of the sermon is practical, and therefore needs not a formal application of this kind; besides that to enforce any thing else, than what was the direct aim of the whole, is really diverting the hearers' attention, and in some degree undoing the effect of what was said. Still more unsuitable are

inferences, relating merely to the truth or the falsehood of certain tenets. When the discourse is a persuasive to the christian life in general, or to some necessary and important duty immediately connected with the whole, as to repentance; in the peroration, one may very pertinently urge some motives to induce the hearers to enter without loss of time on doing that which they must be sensible, it is both their duty and their interest to do. This is no other than advancing the aim and effect of the whole. In this part however, he ought carefully to avoid the formality of proposing and arranging his topics. For this would give the appearance of a new and a separate discourse, to what was intended only as corroborative of the discourse preceding.

THE END.

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