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A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

ARTICLE III.

PERMANENT PREACHING FOR A PERMANENT
PASTORATE.

BY REV. LEONARD WITHINGTON, D.D., NEWBURYPORT, MASS.

SOME eminent critics found their systems on very narrow principles. Almost every critic has a system, and his remarks revolve around one centre-point, and, if its position is a false one, his criticism is imperfect. Longinus on the Sublime is a kind of canonical book, though it is hard to find out what his sublime is. He has no centre-point. Dionysius Halicarnassus, in his criticism on Herodotus and Thucydides, seems to have romance in his eye, rather than truthful history. He blames Thucydides for not being as pleasing as Herodotus; that is, for not telling as many lies. Dr. Bentley is very minute on the chronology of Milton's *Paradise Lost*; the very last thing my humble self would think of in reading that divine poem. Dr. Johnson, in his *Lives of the Poets*, has one ruling canon; and that is, the CURIOSITY with which we read a book to the end and "cast our eyes," he says, "on the last leaf, as a solitary traveller in a desert looks at the setting sun." He even applies this rule to Milton: "But original deficiency cannot be supplied. The want of human interest is always felt. *Paradise Lost* is one of the books which the reader admires, lays down, and forgets to take up again. None ever wished it longer than it is. Its perusal is a duty rather than a pleasure. We read Milton for instruction, retire harrassed and overburdened, and look elsewhere for recreation; we desert our master and seek for companions."¹

Coleridge, though a worse critic, has a far more noble canon: "Not the poem which we have *read*, but that to which we *return* with the greatest pleasure, possesses the genuine power and claims the name of *essential poetry*."²

¹ *Lives of the Poets*, Vol. I. p. 167.² *Biographia Literaria*, Vol. I. p. 22.

In painting, the picture which glares most at first, exhausts its power on the first inspection. There are tunes which we hear once with delight, and never wish to hear repeated.

It is unfortunate for a preacher to have sermons which resemble these pictures or tunes, — where the cause of the first interest is the very cause of the want of interest in the second hearing. Some preachers seem to be doomed to their fate. It is hardly their fault that they wear out. Their very genius is a brush-wood fire which blazes and burns out in its own transient splendor. We cannot expect, we ought not to ask, that the meteor which shoots athwart the heavens, should have the permanence of a fixed star, of longer endurance but inferior brightness. There is another evil; there is nothing that mankind so severely revenge as their own inflated admiration. If they have set a man too high, they never forgive him for their own injustice. The Athenians ostracised their citizens because their own folly had made them too popular, and they dreaded the effects of their previous admiration.

We plant the summer flower, and we know it must soon fade; we plant the oak, and we hope it may wave for centuries. Supposing that the general aim should be for a long pastorate, let us inquire what are the qualities which prepare for this durability, and what is the cultivation which carries these qualities to the highest possible perfection.

It must be confessed that all the requisitions are not of the literary kind. Though our inquiry will *chiefly* be confined to the characteristics of preaching, yet as these, however excellent, may be counteracted by other impediments, it may be proper to glance at some of them. The strongest tower may have stones in its foundation which impair its strength and hasten its fall.

One requisite for a permanent ministry is a contented mind. *Godliness with contentment* is great gain to a preacher, as well as to a private Christian. Ambition should not enter his heart in its narrow form, nor should he measure the importance of his power by the sphere in which it acts. The flower cares not how low the vale may

be in which it grows, if it can fill the whole circuit with its fragrance. Let your good angel whisper to you what Milton has put into the mouth of his devil:

“What matter where, if I be still the same?”

Not that we need to adopt a superstitious tenacity in holding to one spot. We are to hear the voice of God, we are to be willing to follow the indications of providence.

But there is another thing very essential to a permanent pastorate; indeed it is essential to all enterprises in which truth is the design and man is the instrument. Let us secure a personal attachment from our people. They must love us if we expect our permanent plans to do them good. If we consult history we shall find that nearly all the great leaders of the world have been remarkable for almost a fascinating power over the hearts of those that came near them. The great heresiarchs of the church in all ages have begun here. Paul alludes to it in his third chapter of Galatians, first verse: *O foolish Galatians, who hath BEWITCHED you that ye should not obey the truth?* It was something that seemed like witchcraft; and we are told by Jerome that most of the leaders in heresy had great personal attractions. We have similar testimony concerning the warriors and political leaders of antiquity. Alexander was beloved by his friends; Caesar was adored by his soldiers; Cicero, Cato, and even Antony, were men greatly beloved; Gustavus, Cromwell, Pitt, Bonaparte, the same. Even our blessed Saviour, supreme in power and divine majesty, did not disdain this golden key as unlocking the human heart. We have a remarkable proof of this in John xx. 17: *Jesus saith unto her [i. e. Mary] touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my father.* That this woman should have wished to embrace him, whom she must have regarded as almost a ghost, is a proof how great her affection. The spirit of the passage seems to be: “Ah, Mary, the hour of human friendship and fondness is at an end. I belong to the celestial family now; no more time must be spent in fond embraces; you may still love me, but love me as your risen Lord. *For I ascend to my Father and your Father,*

and to my God and your God." Paul, it is clear, won the affections of all with whom he came in contact; and it gave him immense power in preaching the gospel. Like Moses, we may say his face shone with benignity and love. The hardy centurion, the stern judge, the slave-owner, and the tyrant always favored him. No wonder he said to Timothy: *Let no man despise thy youth.*¹ He had a right to put his admonition into this reflected form. He had proved the power of the passions over the action. How much significance is there in that simple declaration: *And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends and refresh himself.*² If Paul gave this fact to Luke, in the conduct of this centurion he modestly related his own.

The preacher of the obscurest parish is the hero of a little world; and in that circumscribed sphere there is room for the greatest skill, and the exercise of the most gigantic virtues. It is true, there is a sense in which the world will hate the faithful preacher of righteousness. But it is a curious kind of hatred. If it has an underground of veneration, it often breaks down at the touch of a finger. It is a hatred which, without a miracle, is most miraculously subdued.

This love is won, not by worldly art, or sacrificing high principle; but by a steady, manly course of discharging duty; by saying the right thing at the right time; by provoking no one, and cringing to no one; but moving, as the sun does, over the bogs and over the gardens, over the hills and over the vales, in the same steady, refulgent course and never clouded but by mists, which gather darkness only to be dissipated again.

But our concern is especially with preaching. This may be divided into two departments: the matter and the manner. As to the matter, we have it provided at our hands in the richness of revelation. We draw from a fountain ever flowing and never exhausted. But we may be misled

¹ 1 Tim. iv. 12.² Acts xxvii. 3.

even by truth, if we pervert its maxims and misunderstand their application. Even the example of Paul may mislead us, if we receive his words without his spirit. He was determined to know nothing among the Corinthians but Jesus Christ, and him crucified. But this maxim, like the wings of the condor, may support a long flight, because it covers a wide space. The gospel has one centre; but what a circumference! Unity in variety is its character. The crucified Jesus is the light and the motive of how many doctrines; how many duties; how many hopes; how many fears; how many songs; how many praises; how many prophecies; how much history! A whole universe of thought and glory revolves around this brilliant centre. The whole nature of man and the designs of God are wrapped up in that little expression. There is no want of affluence, then, in the subjects. The fountain is to be dispersed on every side in little rills for the refreshment of mankind.

The simple question, how it is to be presented to mankind, is answered in the Bible. It is presented especially in a historical form. History prepares the way and gives the exemplification. God lays his right to man's obedience in his benevolence and in creation. The first chapter of Genesis has something to do with the crucifixion. Eden, the Fall, the Antediluvian history, Abraham, the patriarchs, Sinai, the old dispensation, the rites, etc., all look to the central fact of our redemption. Yes, we must know nothing else than Jesus Christ, and him crucified; but the Bible is Christ's word; and whatever theme is there presented, in its boundless variety of facts, precepts, doctrines, and narrations, may teach us the unity of its design, and the copiousness of its executions.

I suppose a preacher may write a sermon on every text in the book of Proverbs, and not forget the theme of Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

Be this your pattern, then, a many-colored circumference, wide and beautiful, revolving around one centre. Do not **cramp** a noble maxim in a narrow mind.

But the manner is also important. It is impossible to

look round this world and not see, in the variety that is presented, a distinction in things, as to the permanency of the impression they make. Some arrest attention and fasten on the memory; others slip from our minds and are forever forgotten. Some delight at first, but the first delight is the very reason why it is not lasting. A temporary interest is the prelude of a speedy decay. A Lombardy poplar and an elm are sure to make different impressions on every beholder. The poplar produces a short admiration; the elm is lasting. A regular garden, where

No pleasing intricacies intervene,
 No artful wildness to perplex the scene;
 Grove nods to grove, each alley has a brother,
 And half the platform just reflects the other.
 The suffering eye inverted nature sees,
 Trees cut to statues, statues thick as trees,

compared with the interwoven paths and endless diversity of Mount Auburn. The ocean and a fish-pond have different attractions. It is vastly important not to please too soon, if we wish to please long. The rose is the queen of flowers, owing to its reserved beauty and its endless variety. "The irregular combinations," says Dr. Johnson, "of fanciful invention may delight awhile, by that novelty of which the common satiety of life sends us all in quest; but the pleasures of sudden wonder are soon exhausted, and the mind can only repose on the stability of truth." All this passes into the imitating works of man. The mirror keeps the laws of the landscape it reflects. We are never tired of some poems; and some astonish us at first, and every repetition weakens the pleasure:

Haec placet semel, haec decies repetita placebit.

Sometimes men of astonishing ingenuity exhaust their powers in a short time, because they refuse to follow the path of nature. If I understand a "conceit," it means a very pretty thought, very curious, but having no foundation in natural suggestion and natural feeling. Thus the following thought in Shakspeare is a conceit—a concetto. When Prospero is describing his being put into a *rotten*

carcass of a boat; and banished from Milan, he tells his daughter:

The very rats
Instinctively had quit it; there they hoist us,
To cry to the sea that roared to us; to sigh
To the winds, whose pity, sighing back again,
Did us but loving wrong.

Now every one sees that this description has no pathos in it, because it has no foundation in nature. The author meant to be fine, but he forgot that he must lose the simplicity of feeling in the profusion of his ingenuity. The concert of the crying victims to the roaring sea, one striking the tenor and the other the bass, we may suppose; and then the mutual sigh of the sea and the souls, producing the *loving wrong* of the former,— what a frozen admiration it produces in every reader of taste! Such combinations cannot last. Notwithstanding the attempt of Rogers and Coleridge to restore to our perusal such writers as Thomas Fuller and George Herbert, I might safely defy any man to read either of them for half an hour on a stretch. Who ever read the whole of Young's *Night Thoughts*? We no sooner enter the garden of his spices, than we are suffocated by their fragrance. No relief; no plain interstices, no soft green for the eye to rest on. His peonies, his pinks, and his dahlia's blush before us in the most crimson profusion; and his poetry has every excellence but simplicity and nature. Alas, a biased mind always turns to bad models. The faults of Young are owing, partly, at least, to the beauties of Seneca. He has sometimes literally translated him. What a pity it is that his susceptible eye could not have fallen on a passage in Pliny,¹ in which he shows that the earth, after a long drought, having been drenched in a shower, as it lies resting beneath a setting sun, and spanned by a rainbow, emits a peculiar exhalation, to which the fragrance of no single flower can be compared. It is hardly perceptible at first; but it increases in sweet-

¹ Lib. XVII. c. 5.

ness as it gains on our attention, and would not exhaust its power should it continue forever.

These are no new discoveries ; Cicero saw them from his own experience. Hear his testimony. "A style of speaking," says he, "is to be selected, which especially detains the mind, which those who hear may not only hear with delight, but be delighted without satiety. I do not suppose you expect from me a caution that you should avoid the barren, the uncultivated, the vulgar, the obsolete. The genius of the age demands something greater. It may be hard to say why it is that what gives pleasure at first should so soon wear out, and alienate us from itself, in fastidiousness and satiety. But how many more things are there gaudy and florid in new pictures than in old ones, which, though at first sight they captivate us, cannot please us long ; when in old paintings, the same objects, rough and plain, never weary us. In singing, how much more soft and delicate the turns and the falsetto notes, than the simple and severe, which not only the rigid critics, but the very multitude reject. This we may see, too, in the other senses. We are not so long pleased with unguents of the highest flavor and sweetness, as those that are moderate. We praise more the smell of the earth than the richness of the crocus.¹ Our touch is not pleased with what is too soft. Even the taste, which is the most voluptuous of all our senses, and which relishes sweetness more than all the rest — how soon is that which is too sweet rejected and despised. Who can long drink or eat what is over-seasoned ? In each case, the slighter the stimulant the less the satiety. Thus in all things, the greatest fastidiousness borders on the highest pleasure. We need not wonder it is so in public speech, because we can see, both from orators and poets, that a fine, nice, ornamented, holiday strain, without intermission, without reprehension (i. e. in single paragraphs), without variety, cannot delight long, however beautiful the pictures, or however bright the colors. It is true, in a spoken

¹ See Pliny in the last-quoted passage.

composition, whether poetry or prose, the disgust comes sooner, because we judge by instinct more than by mental rule. When a composition is written (and read alone), these tawdry faults are known less by the ear and more by the judgment."¹

The lasting man has a simple manner, true feeling, some substance, severe ornament; he is a child of nature, has great earnestness and little show. He never overdoes; he has no forced pathos; no pounding violence. He weeps only from the magnitude of the occasion, and he weeps but seldom. It is said, I think, of Washington, that he wept only once during the revolutionary war, but they were terrible tears. The lasting man is likely to leave on the conviction of his hearers an impression of reserved strength. He completely loses himself in his subject; he never does his best; or, if he does, it is a profound secret to every one besides himself. He has no pompous preparation about him; he sounds no trumpet, and he never gives an egotistic emphasis to his most original remarks. They steal from him free and limpid, like water from the spring beneath the rock. The lasting man turns even his impediments into facilities; and his weights are wings sometimes to exalt his flight. I have known very impressive speakers to begin by stammering; and one, I know who actually lisped. Paul, we may infer, was such a specimen. He was too modest a man to say it, but we learn the secret from what others said of him. What else can be the meaning of 2 Cor. x. 10. *For his letters (say they) are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.* This last expression may be understood of the first ten paragraphs of his discourses. Nobody said this, but he who went out of the meeting before he closed; for he once continued his speech until midnight, and only one fell asleep.²

The great secret is, to touch a chord that will vibrate forever. There are two important elements, which we must study to learn and join. First, an earnest discussion of the

¹ De Oratore, Lib. III. sec. 25.

² See Acts xx. 7, 8, 9, 10.

most important truths; and secondly, fully to unfold their bearing on the life and heart. Here we have Paul's example, who begins his epistles by stating and proving the most recondite principles of religion, and in the close shows how they bear on practice. No one can have all the ammunition for a lasting ministry, who does not discuss. It will not do to follow Dr. Blair's example, who avoids the doctrinal as a pitfall. Whatever your opinion, wherever you stand, do not have any covered wells, which you dare not open; any important topics on which you preserve a mysterious silence. On any subject on which the readers of the Bible *must* think, you must sometimes speak. How much interest, for example, did Dr. Emmons give to his long ministry by his earnest discussions. But it is by no means necessary to think exactly as Dr. Emmons did, to show the good policy and profit of frequent discussion. Wherever you stand, whatever your opinion, canvass and examine the great principles of our being and happiness. It is what the plainest congregation hungers for; and though they at first may shrink from it with a fidgety repulsion, yet the frankest examination will gain in the end. Take the doctrine of election as an example. Every one knows how much Dr. Emmons preached it. But I can bring an opposite example. The late Dr. Popkin was my predecessor at Newbury: the greatest sceptic perhaps that ever undertook to preach the gospel. Professor Stuart said of him, that he rather thought that two and two make four, but he was not sure. Now let me ask the reader: can you suppose that this nervous, trembling, doubting mind would ever encounter the doctrine of election? A man, who when he ventured to say anything positive, his own courage would almost frighten him to death on reflection. Shall Dr. Popkin meet the doctrine of election; and how in the world will he treat it? Yes, he did encounter it, and preached a series of sermons on the doctrine of unconditional election. And how did he treat it? Why, just like himself, in the true Popkinsian way (which, of course, was not the Hopkinsian). He first preached several sermons as strongly arguing as possible in

its defence, quoting what the learned Calvin and Augustine said, and then the inspired Paul, as if he would fasten it on his people's minds with rivets of iron; then he turned round for several sabbaths, and gave the strongest objections, quoting what the learned Episcopius said, and the learned Whitby, and especially those passages of scripture which imply the obligations of morality and the freedom of man; then he left the people to remember, weigh, and judge. The consequence was, they were in a blue maze: they hardly knew what to think. They said it was a great and awful subject; and this was, perhaps, the very impression the preacher designed to make. Now I will not contend that this is the best way to bring a people to a knowledge of the truth; but with such a curious mind as the speaker possessed, what could he have done better? He gave his people food for meditation; and, however imperfect his faith, he made a noble attempt to sound the depths of our being. How much better than that superficial matter, which is so obvious that no one regards it.¹

And yet the obvious bearing of simple principles must not be neglected. It is a great art to make the hortatory part of preaching impressive. It is the end and upshot of all principle. It is too often the case that the man that is successful in doctrinal discussion acquires an exclusive taste for it, and becomes negligent and weak when he passes into the practical part of his preaching. Let him resemble the oak, which, though yearly it swells and strengthens its massy trunk and branches, never fails to clothe their rigor with the trembling leaves of a living vegetation. It requires as much

¹ Far be it from me to wish to depreciate this simple-hearted and wise man; and more wise because he was so simple-hearted. A selection of his writings has been published by President Felton. His criticism on the Greek Tragedies is the most curious specimen in the English language. Two currents are running in opposite directions in his mind, a deep veneration for the traditional opinion, and an individual impression of his own, which it distresses him to present. His watch-word seems to be, "I almost half think that these great men are not quite right. I *seem* to think it may be otherwise." One cannot help smiling, when almost the first word that meets him in his Latin preface to the third volume of the *Graeca Majora*, is *opinamur*.

talent, perhaps more, to write an effective sermon on candor, meekness, patience, contentment, justice, fidelity, as on the higher points of systematic theology. *These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.* Like Sampson, the champion must get hold of the two pillars on which the house stands, and thus kill the Philistines. This part of the work demands great effort, and should be studied. The union of these departments gives vigor to both. Practical preaching has double power when it grows out of fundamental principles. We must study the practical part in our own hearts and in the wants of our people. But it is well also to study models. One of the most beautiful is Dr. Evans, of London, "Discourses concerning the Christian Temper." They are written with a severe simplicity, but great strength. Two other models may be mentioned, because their comparison and contrast are more instructive than their separate impression. I allude to Jeremy Taylor and Richard Baxter, both of them writers of great copiousness of matter, and endless profusion of illustration. But what a difference! What superiority in the rich simplicity of one over the hot-house abundance of the other! I never could accept the character with which Taylor has been delivered to us. He is never self-forgetful; he always detains you on the image; he plays his coruscations before you as Whipple would his dissolving-views; and you always admire the robe, without thinking of the form that wears it. Now whatever Taylor *was*, Baxter *was not*; so unconscious in his art, so negligent in his profusion; snatching you, in a chariot of gems, to the goal of the journey you are impatient to finish. Perhaps it may assist us to put Taylor in his right place, to see how his ornaments struck his cotemporaries. Dr. South has characterized him without calling him by name; and though South was a sullen man, he was a true critic. He never minced matters. In his eleventh sermon, fifth volume, preached on Ascension day, April 30th, 1668, speaking on simplicity in preaching the gospel, he says, "*I speak the words of truth and soberness,*" said Paul,¹ and 'I preach

¹ Acts xxvi. 25.

the gospel, not with *the enticing words of man's wisdom.*¹ This was the way of the apostle's discharging of things sacred. Nothing here of *the fringes of the north star*; nothing of *nature's becoming unnatural*; nothing of *the down of angels' wings*, or *the beautiful locks of cherubims*; no starched similitudes, introduced with a *thus have I seen a cloud rolling in its airy mansion*, and the like.² No, these were sublimities above the rise of the apostolic spirit. The apostles, poor mortals, were content to take lower steps, and to tell the world, in plain terms, *that he who believed should be saved, and that he who believed not should be damned*. And this was the dialect which pierced the conscience, and made the hearers cry out, *Men and brethren, what shall I do?* It tickled not the ear, but sunk into the heart; and when men came from such sermons, they never commended the preacher for his taking voice or gesture; for the fineness of such a simile, or the quaintness of such a sentence; but they spoke like men conquered with the overpowering force and evidence of the most concerning truths; much in the words of the two disciples going to Emmaus: *Did not our hearts burn within us, while he opened to us the scriptures?*"

I pass over the various topics suggested by the clouds and sunshine of passing events, all of which must have some utterance from the pulpit; though every pious preacher will abjure that poverty of mind which regards a storm or the explosion of a steamboat, or an accident on a railroad, as a sort of God-send to eke out subjects for popular attraction. I hasten to notice another mode of preaching once current, now too much neglected; a mode most likely to secure to the humblest invention the riches of the Bible: *the art of expounding*.

Our early fathers thought much of this; but it has of late years very strangely fallen into disuse, to the great detriment both of ministers and people. The pulpit has lost one of

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 4.

² Remark how the excess and absurdity of Taylor's expressions are increased by being insulated and separated from the context. Such was the malicious skill of the critic.

the brightest radiations of its glory. There is a general impression that it is unpopular; and the only reason is, that it has fallen into reluctant hands. We can make any style of preaching unpopular by not learning our trade. If it is unpopular, you must make it popular. The burning of the anthracite coal was exceedingly unpopular until people had learned how to use it. The truth is, there is no mode of presenting sacred truth so rich, so various, so impressive, so fascinating. You have all history, *rich with spoils of time*, to help you. It has this important benefit, that it connects your philological studies with your public ministrations. It keeps up your interest in biblical investigation; it makes you a better Hebrew scholar, a better Greek scholar;¹ it makes you at once a familiar tenant, both of the old world and new; and you bring down the wealth of the former to increase the accumulated importations of the latter. It leads you to inspect every part of the Bible, and the more you spend the richer you grow. I can conceive of nothing more improving than tracing the progress of language (the sacred language of God, too), the laws of thought, the uniformity and variety of revelation, comparing the two opposite poles of the extremest ancient and modern life; and the divine art by which God himself unfolds his complicated purposes to man. *A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.*

One important point in lecturing or expounding on a chapter, a psalm, or a section, is selection; that is, with a quick eye to discover what is practical and proper for the people. This is the cumulative point of all legitimate investigation. We must not be pedants; we must not attempt

¹ Let me turn aside gratefully to remember the advice the late Prof. Gibbs gave me, when a young man and he a fellow student, but less of a fellow student than an instructor. Mentioning to him the danger of forgetting our studies in the care of a parish; "There is," said he, "one excellent way to prevent this: take a passage, — a Psalm, a chapter in Isaiah, or a whole book, — study it critically and thoroughly, and expound it to your people; you need not, of course, bring out all the points you examine; but bring out the result. You will find the benefit both for you and for them." Never were words more fitly spoken; and this, and many other counsels, I can only forget when I follow him to the grave, and perhaps not even *then*.

to lead the people through the mazes of learned wisdom or learned trifling, which amuses the recesses of academic stiltiness. Selection, skilful selection, must be your rule. You are to see, with a divine tact, what belongs to yourself and what to offer to your people. Sift the material, and keep the bran to yourself, and offer the meal to them. 'This maxim, of course, belongs only to the evangelical class. If I were one of the Tübingen historical school, I should never think of a popular lecture on the Bible. Their investigations evaporate into nothing —

Rich windows, that exclude the light,
And passages that lead to nothing.

The laborers of this school keep digging and scratching in their gold mine, amidst noxious gases and frail safety lamps, to bring up their glittering pyrites, which they have, over and over again, assured us are worth nothing. The Bible, if it be worth anything, has an end, a result; and that result can always be presented, with the deepest interest, to the plainest congregation.

The benefits of this mode of preaching are, that you keep fresh your seminary lessons; you become a biblical critic; your Hebrew and your Greek never fade; they are renewed, by little and little, every week; you occupy rich ground; you forestall your own narrowing idiosyncracies; you are never at a loss for a subject; you throw yourself on the tow-line of Providence; you find wonderful coincidences; your discourses will have a surprising application; you are often faithful to existing sin, without seeming to design it; you are always sheltered behind a sacred shield; you neglect no part of revelation; you almost become a prophet of God, and you go to Egypt to encounter its corruptions and its hosts with the rod of God in your hand.

After all, it must be confessed that a long pastorate does not depend on preaching alone. There are other elements. Some men, who seemed to have every excellence in forming a sermon, have had very short settlements; the attractions of the desk being counteracted by the imperfections of pri-

vate life. The causes of change are various; let us glance at some of them; I shall state them in the concrete, frankly saying that these instances, offered under John Bunyan names, have been suggested in actual life, though I hope no one will be impertinent enough to hunt out or find the living examples.

Dr. Rhetoric was always changing; he was a man of disproportionate power; with a fine person and a thrilling voice. He had passages in his discourses which would almost start the house from its foundation. But his taste was incorrect; if he often hit, he sometimes missed; and his great impediment was, that somehow his very eloquence created a craving he could not satisfy; he had, at last, to compare himself to Noah's dove, who left the ark to find no rest for the sole of her foot. The Rev. Mr. Indiscreet was his pupil; I watched him from the first, and never did a preacher so disappoint me. He began by imitating Dr. Rhetoric, and, as Dr. Johnson had clearly proved that no man ever became great by imitation, I set him down as a failure. But no: Indiscreet survived his imitations, soared above them; had every quality for a permanent preacher, so far as sermonizing is concerned; but, alas, failed for want of common sense. He was always moving. Mr. Finespun was a remarkable example. Finespun had power, had ability; imitated nobody, and was original to the last degree. But his combinations were forced; his figures were brought from the ends of the earth. Nothing could be more curious than his introductions; and when he named his text, no hearer could divine what would be the subject; yet Finespun was a man of real power; and if, when he left his mathematics, he could have remembered that a straight line was the nearest distance between two given points, it would have been better for him.¹ He always had use for his wings.

¹ Burke, to be sure, in his speech on the Nabob of Arcot's Debts, has the following passage, which I quote, both to give some idea of our friend's manner, and to show how Burke could sometimes *go down* towards Finespun's beauties, though Finespun could never *get up* to Burke's faults. "From the marrowless bones of these skeleton establishments, by the use of every sort of cutting an

Shotover had short pastorates, and abundance of them. He has left the world a lesson which himself never would learn. Shotover was too politic; he played the politician about cabbages. He always had a plot, because he always imagined a counter-plot against him. If he had the simplest measure to carry in his church, his friends must meet; there must be a caucus; "we may have opponents; we must be ready for them, etc., etc.," until finally, he had use for all the machinery he had prepared; and what was very sad, Shotover could see the last need of his machinery, but never could see the origin of the evil. Wigfall I always sincerely pitied; for he had short settlements without any great cause. Somehow or other, he always made the impression that he was a great man, and in a few years the people always found out that he was not so great a man as they thought him. They were indignant, and rose at once to revenge their own mistake on their fugitive victim. He went to another vineyard to make the same impression and to find the same treatment. Sensitive was killed by gossips, busybodies, and tale-bearers. O if he could have put on the shield of indifference — but he did not wholly make himself. Wantwill tried to please everybody, and ended in pleasing none, not even himself. Rev. Mr. Flash had a most pleasing and pathetic voice, and might have spoken for years with effect, if he could have found anything to say; but he died a pastoral death, smothered in his own previous popularity. Wronghead had a short career, because he never could put two ideas together. His sermons generally consisted of one idea, which he would repeat over about seven thousand times, with astonishing variety of language. He would endeavor to make the bantling pass for a new baby by putting on a new slip; but when the audience found it out, they dismissed him and his bantling together. But the most melancholy example of the temporary was my

every sort of fretting tool, he flatters himself that he may chip and rasp an empirical elementary powder, to diet into some similitude of health and substance the languishing chimeras of fraudulent reformation." — *Burke's Works*, Vol. II. p. 393.

dear friend Mr. Prim. Prim was a good scholar, a man of common sense, a diligent worker, and a true Christian; and yet he was slow to find a settlement, and never could keep what he had slowly found. What was the matter? Dr. Franklin makes poor Richard say, "a little neglect may breed great mischief: for want of a nail, the shoe was lost; for want of a shoe, the horse was lost; and for want of a horse, the rider was lost, being overtaken and slain by the enemy; all for want of a little care about a horse-shoe nail." Prim was obstructed by little impediments, and which he knew to be little at the time. Nobody must speak to him going to meeting; no one must intrude on particular hours; if he had a call for settlement, he must put in some vexatious condition: they must have a new bell, or change the lamps, or the hymn-books. His manner was always precise, and his very laugh was ungenial. In short, he was a rose-bush full of verdure, flowers, and fragrance; but you could not touch him but some hidden briar would scratch your fingers and repel your friendship. He fell a victim to little briars.

The conclusion is, that short pastorates are more owing to defects in the clergy than faults in the people. Let a preacher have discretion, industry, piety, and common sense; let him love his work and understand his people; let him be firm without stiffness, and yielding without false conformity; let him wish to be permanent, and he will be so, if he can only GET THROUGH HIS THIRD YEAR. Pindar, in one of his odes, speaks of those who reach the immortal fields by enduring the three purgations.