

forcibly, why go over it again? And if it was a feeble affair, why exhibit it a second time? Occasionally, of course, the repetition of a few sentences may be very telling; anything may be good occasionally, and yet be very vicious as a habit. Who wonders that people do not listen the first time when they know it is all to come over again?

Yet further, do not repeat the same idea over and over again in other words. Let there be something fresh in each sentence. Be not for ever hammering away at the same nail: yours is a large Bible; permit the people to enjoy its length and breadth. And, brethren, do not think it necessary or important every time you preach to give a complete summary of theology, or a formal digest of doctrines, after the manner of Dr. Gill,—not that I would discredit or speak a word against Dr. Gill—his method is admirable for a body of divinity, or a commentary, but not suitable for preaching. I know a divine whose sermons whenever they are printed read like theological summaries, more fitted for a classroom than for a pulpit—they fall flat on the public ear. Our hearers do not want the bare bones of technical definition, but meat and flavour. Definitions and differences are all very well; but when they are the staple of a sermon they remind us of the young man whose discourse was made up of various important distinctions. Upon this performance an old deacon observed, that there was one distinction which he had omitted, namely, the distinction between meat and bones. If preachers do not make that distinction, all their other distinctions will not bring them much distinction.

In order to maintain attention, *avoid being too long*. An old preacher used to say to a young man who preached an hour,—“My dear friend, I do not care what else you preach about, but I wish you would always preach *about* forty minutes.” We ought seldom to go much beyond that—forty minutes, or say, three-quarters of an hour. If a fellow cannot say all he has to say in that time, when will he say it? But somebody said he liked “to do justice to his subject.” Well, but ought he not to do justice to his people, or, at least, have a little mercy upon them, and not keep them too long? The subject will not complain of you, but the people will. In some country places, in the afternoon especially, the farmers have to milk their cows, and one farmer bitterly complained to me about a young man—I think from this College—“Sir, he ought to have given over at four o’clock, but he kept on till half-past, and there were all my cows waiting to be milked!