

homiletic purposes, and must, therefore, treat them in the most concrete, popular, and eloquent manner possible, by dealing with their implications and inferences.

The sermon may also conclude with what we have termed the *direct address*. This is more strictly oratorical in its nature than the inferential conclusion. It does not, like this latter, contribute to a further development of the subject of the discourse, while it is applying it to the hearer, but is simply and solely applicatory. The inference, as we have seen, is somewhat didactic. It imparts some further information in respect to the theme of the discourse, while it addresses the affections and will. It is not so with the direct address, or the strictly oratorical peroration. This supposes that the proposition and its proof, or the theme and its treatment, have exhausted the subject in both its theoretic and practical aspects; and in this case nothing remains but to apply it. As a consequence, this species of conclusion is much briefer than that by inferences. It ought not to be at all didactic. It should be purely oratorical and highly hortatory. But such a species of discourse cannot continue long; and perhaps the art of the orator is nowhere more visible than in the skill with which, in the conclusion, he presses his theme upon the affections and will of the hearer. If this vehemence is too prolonged, it defeats itself. If this exhortation goes beyond the proper limits, it not only fatigues but disgusts the mind of the auditor. No preachers are more wearisome than those who are styled hortatory preachers. Their direct address is unsupported by doctrine. Their whole oration is peroration. They

PLAN OF A SERMON.

179

omit the proposition and the proof in their plan. It is safer to overdo the address to the understanding than the address to the feelings. The understanding is a cool and sensible faculty, and good sense never tires or disgusts it. But the feelings are both shy and excitable. Addressed too boisterously, they make their retreat; addressed too continually, they lose their tone and sensibility altogether.

The direct address to the hearer should be characterized by the following qualities: First, it must be *appropriate*. (1) By this is meant that the conclusion should enforce the one proposition or the one lesson of the sermon. Every part and particle of the peroration should be pertinent to the discourse as a whole. And this implies, secondly, that the conclusion by direct address be *single*. (2) It cannot be appropriate unless it is characterized by unity. Whatever the doctrine of the sermon may be, the conclusion must apply this and this only. Says that eccentric preacher, Rowland Hill: 'The Gospel is an excellent milch cow, which always gives plenty of milk, and of the best quality. I first pull at justification, then give a plug at adoption, and afterwards a tit at sanctification; and so on until I have filled my pail with gospel milk.' Now if the body of the sermon has been constructed upon this plan, then an appropriate conclusion would not be one and single in its character. A peroration pertinent to *such* a discourse would be double and twisted. But we have seen that every sermon ought to be characterized by the utmost unity; that it should approximate to the topical form, even when it does not employ it, and should always approach as nearly as possible to the oration, by containing but one