

minutes' length were in vogue, they would be exactly suited for them; but as they cannot be expanded, without platitude, to forty-five minutes, he must forego them, or else trifle with his task.¹ Now, in expository preaching all this material is employed; for these brief tracts of thought being connected by the natural tie of the context, are all interwoven into the discourse. Not seldom, these minor subjects assume a temporary importance which, if their discussion has been neglected, will cause the minister to regret his oversight. For instance, one would scarcely deem it appropriate to demand the whole morning hour of a large audience, assembled to learn the way of salvation, for an explanation of the precept, "Swear not at all." Matt. v. 34. His sensible hearers would say that he were better employed teaching lost souls how to escape hell. Yet it may well happen that some day an intrusive Tunker or Quaker may here embarrass the consciences of many good people in his charge, if ignorant of the scriptural solution. Now, had this pastor expounded the "Sermon on the Mount" in course, he would have found the suitable and graceful occasion to say these few paragraphs which are needed on this subject.

A more weighty advantage is, that the expository method enables the pastor to introduce without offence those delicate subjects of temptation and duty, and those obnoxious doctrines and rebukes, which, on the

¹ For example, I once heard a minister occupy a large country congregation with a refutation of the crotchet of Adam Clarke in favour of Judas' salvation. The people were at first interested; but at the end of fifteen minutes the subject was exhausted, and they were left with the blankest appearance of surprise and discontent.

opposite method, always incur so much *odium*. The fragmentary preacher will find it a very difficult and delicate thing to request his charge to give him the Sabbath hour for the discussion of polygamy, of divorce, of the other sins against chastity. The taste of many will be disgusted. They will ask, "What foul taint does our pastor suspect in us, that he supposes these offensive subjects necessary?" Yet there may be good cause—if not now, hereafter. Some Mormon emissary may seduce some of the more ignorant and unstable to his abominable creed. Some better minds may be harassed with skeptical difficulties concerning the polygamy of the saints of the old dispensation. We know that the awkward silence of the pulpit concerning the seventh commandment has been the occasion of much of the shocking levity of opinion which prevails as to its breach. Now, if the pastor has engaged to preach an exposition of the whole book of Exodus, all is made easy. He did not introduce these subjects there: it is God who has done it; and if he would be faithful, he has no option to omit them. So, the doctrine of predestination is so obnoxious to some minds that to obtrude it voluntarily on them is, in their eyes, almost an assault. But if the pastor is expounding in course the Epistle to the Romans, he cannot be blamed by the most unreasonable for treating that point; for it is obviously there, and he has no choice. Once more, if the pastor introduces, of his own motion, denunciations against a sin which is prevalent among a particular class or with a few persons, there is danger of a violent outcry against his "personalities." He is charged with singling out the objects of his criticism in order to

inflict a malicious pain, by making their fault conspicuous; for no transgressor is impudent enough to make open complaint because God rebukes him in His word. But if the language of condemnation stands in the passage which comes up regularly for exposition, the cavil is silenced. It was not the choice of the minister that the sin of these men is now denounced: it was their own choice that they impinged against the immutable law of God.

Fifth. The immemorial usage of the Church should commend this method to us. The sketch which I gave you of the history of preaching showed that this exercise among the Hebrews, the apostolic and the primitive Christians, was expository. The opposite method was traced by antiquaries to the Romish clergy of the dark ages. The great Reformation was emphatically a reformation of the pulpit in this particular, and a revival of expository preaching. The better Puritans still honoured the custom; and it has been left for our century to imitate the error of the twelfth and to discard the method again. But even our age has not been wholly without instructive witnesses: some of the most eminent and useful pastors who have adorned the Church have continued to honour the ancient usage. Among these may be mentioned Dr. John M. Mason. It was his custom to occupy the morning hour with an expository discourse, and the evening with the free discussion of some scriptural principle or fact evolved by the explanations of the morning. He has left his emphatic testimony against the neglect of expositions in the sermon preached to his people on resigning his charge in New York. He here says (speaking of the