

the era of the elder or the later Nonconformists. We may suppose his practice in this particular to be no extreme case. Mr Henry was an able and laborious preacher from single texts, but it was by no means to the exclusion of the expository plan. On every Lord's day morning, he read and expounded a part of the Old Testament; on every Lord's day afternoon a part of the New; in both instances proceeding in regular order. During his residence in Chester he went over the whole Bible in this exercise, more than once.* Such was the custom of our forefathers; and in the prosecution of such a plan we need not wonder that they found the body of their hearers constantly advancing in scriptural attainments. The sense of change, and change without improvement, is unavoidable when we come down to our own times; in which, within our immediate knowledge, there are not a dozen ministers who make the expounding of Scripture any part of their stated pulpit exercises. Nay, although our Directory for Worship declares expressly that "the reading of the Holy Scriptures in the congregation, is a part of the public worship of God, and ought to be performed by the ministers and teachers;"—that the preacher, "in each service, ought to read at least one chapter, and more, when the chapters are short or the connection requires it;" yet it is undeniably the common practice to confine this service, which is treated as something almost supererogatory, to the Lord's day morning. Now while we are zealous in maintaining, that the Christian minister should not be bound down by any imperative rubric or calendar as to the portion which he shall read, we cannot but blush when we compare our actual performances in this kind with those of many sister churches who have chosen to be guided by more strict liturgical arrangements.

3. The expository method is adapted to secure the greatest amount of scriptural knowledge to both preacher and hearers. It needs no argument, we trust, to sustain the position that every minister of the gospel should be mighty in the Scriptures; familiar with the whole text; versed in the best commentaries; at home in every portion of both Testaments; and accustomed

* Williams, *Life of Henry*, c. x.

to grapple with the most perplexing difficulties. This is the appropriate and peculiar field of clerical study. It is obvious that the pulpit exercises of every diligent minister will give direction and colour to his private lucubrations. In order to success and usefulness in any species of discourse, the preacher must love his work, and must have it constantly before his mind. He must be possessed of enthusiasm which shall never suffer him to forget the impending task. His reading, his meditation, and even his casual trains of thought, must perpetually revert to the performances of the Sabbath. And we take pleasure in believing that such is actually the case with a large proportion of clergymen.

Now it must not be concealed that the popular and prevalent mode of sermonizing, however favourable it may be to professional zeal of this kind, and to the cultivation of mental habits, does by no means lead in any equal measure to the laborious study of the Scriptures. The text, it is true, must be a fragment of the word of God; and it may be confirmed and illustrated by parallel or analogous passages. But where no extended exposition is attempted, the preacher is naturally induced to draw upon systematic treatises, philosophical theories, works of mere literature, or his own ingenuity of invention, and fertility of imagination, for such a train of thought as, under the given topic, may claim the praise of novelty. We are aware that with many it is far otherwise, and that there are preachers who are wont to select such texts as necessarily draw after them a full interpretation of all the foregoing and following context; and such sermons are, to all intents and purposes, expositions. But we also know, that to compose a sermon upon a text of Scripture, with very little reference to its position in the word of God, and a very little inquiry as to the intent of the Spirit in the words, is a thing not only possible, but common. The evil grows apace, wherever the rhetorical aspect of preaching attracts undue attention; and the desire to be original, striking, ingenious, and elegant, supercedes the earnest endeavour to be scriptural.

This abuse is in a good degree precluded by the method of exposition. The minister who from week to week is labouring to elucidate some important book of Scripture, has this kept