

The introduction, in its nature, is preparatory. It does not lay down any truth, it does not establish any doctrine, it simply prepares the way for the fundamental parts and necessary matter of the discourse. In secular eloquence, one very important object of the exordium is to conciliate the hearer towards the speaker; to remove prejudices, and to awaken sympathy with him. There is not, ordinarily, any need of an exordium for this purpose in sacred eloquence. The preacher, unless he has been exceedingly unfaithful to himself and his calling, may presume upon the good-will and the respect of his auditory, and need not waste time or words in endeavouring to secure a favourable attention to himself as a man. It is, however, sometimes necessary that the preacher, in his introduction, should conciliate his audience in respect to his subject. If his theme is a very solemn and awful one, if the proof and discussion of it lead to those very close and pungent trains of thought which are apt to offend fallen human nature, it is well for the sermonizer to prepare the mind of his auditor for this plain dealing with his heart and conscience. The introduction in this case affords an opportunity to remind the hearer that preaching is for the soul's good and the soul's salvation; that, when the subject requires it, the plainest discourse is really the kindest and most affectionate; that the truth which is to be established and applied is a part of God's revelation; and that, however severe it may seem, it is the severity of divine wisdom and love.

The ordinary office of the introduction, however, is to exhibit the text in its connections, and to explain its less