

The porch which leads into the house is in contact with it.

But, second, the introduction must not embody a thought which is essential to the main discussion. This is an error of structure to which the inexperienced and impulsive writer is prone. Approaching the work of composition with a mind fired by the subject, he finds those ideas which are cardinal to it prominent in his thoughts, and he can scarcely refrain from pouring out some one of them the moment he begins. The consequence is, that when he proceeds in earnest to deal with his proposition, he will find he has anticipated essential matter. He has now only the choice between a bald repetition of his first idea, or else a leaving of his argument fragmentary. A stone which is absolutely necessary to close his arch has been already laid in the threshold.

Third. An *exordium* should contain only one leading thought. If the first one introduced is related to the text, this leads us to it: why interpose another? If it is not, it should not enter the *exordium* at all: the second distinct thought which follows it does the real work, and the first was nugatory. There is no need of a porch to enter a porch: we desire to step at once from the porch into the house.

Fourth. While the thought of the *exordium* should by no means be trivial or uninteresting, neither should it be ambitious. It should not vie in splendour with all that are to succeed it, lest it should raise too much promise to the expectation of the hearers. The impression which they carry away from a sermon is usually that produced by its concluding parts. If you fail there to

fulfil the promise of your outset, the pleasing surprise which you gave them in commencing will not cause them to pardon you the disappointment.<sup>1</sup>

[ From these rules you will easily infer that the introduction must be short, relatively to the whole sermon. A long and ambitious *exordium* is ruinous to all subsequent effect. It wastes time; it consumes the preacher's strength; it exhausts the sensibility of the people before the stage of the sermon for which it is needed. Young writers are usually inclined to dilate too much upon their preliminary topics. This is because they are zealous for thoroughness, and being inexperienced in the work of composition, they do not know how largely the whole discourse will grow upon their hands, when amplified in the same proportion. It is far better to abridge the introductory parts than to be compelled, by an ill-judged waste of time there, to mar the more important thoughts near the close. For this, as well as other reasons, it is well that the young preacher should not attempt to write his introduction until the discussion has been either written, or at least expanded in the mind.<sup>2</sup> ]

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<sup>1</sup> Horace Ep. ad Pisones, lines 136-145 :

"Nec si incipies ut scriptor cyclicus olim;  
 'Fortunam Priami cantalo et nobile bellum.'  
 Quid dignum tanto feret hic promissor hiatus?  
 Parturiunt monotes, nascetur ridiculus mus.  
 Quanto rectius hic, qui nil molitur inepte:  
 'Dic mihi, Musa, virum captæ post tempora Trojæ,  
 Qui mores hominum multorum vidit et urbes.'  
 Non fumum ex fulgore, sed ex fumo dare lucem,  
 Cogitat, ut speciosa dehinc miracula promat,  
 Antiphatem, Scyllamque, et cum Cyclope Charybdin."

<sup>2</sup> Cicero de Or. L. ii., c. 77, § 315. "Hisce omnibus rebus considerat." Dabney, Robert L. *Sacred Rhetoric*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1979.