

which required an *exordium*. As the approach to the main subject without any preparation would be abrupt and unskilful, so to relinquish it without conclusion would be awkward and incomplete. As a transition stage of sentiment was found necessary to raise the hearer, from his ordinary apathy, to the tone of the sacred truth to be discussed, so a transition is desirable, to consign him to the state of sacred meditation and conviction in which the sermon is designed to result. Again: the aim of all rhetorical discourse is to produce a practical determination of the hearer's will. To this end, the truths discussed should be so applied, after they have been explained and demonstrated, as to connect the force of the whole in one effect. "A threefold cord is not quickly broken." Each several head of discussion may be likened to one strand. It is the conclusion which twines them all together, combining their strength and drawing the convinced hearer irresistibly to his duty. The separate branches of argument are the parallel rays of the sun of truth; the conclusion is the lens which refracts them into one burning focus. Once more: these several parts of the argument must be presented by the speaker, and considered by the hearers, singly in detail; for to mingle the discussion of them together could result only in confusion and obscurity. The preacher must lay aside the first in order to take up the second head; he dismisses the second in order to introduce the third. He must, in a certain degree, call his hearers away from the previous point to attend to the one in hand: he must require them temporarily to exclude it, in order to give full attention to the next. If, then, there were no con-

clusion, the branch of argument treated last would occupy an undue place before the mind of the hearer, and the force of the previous ones would be partly lost. Hence the necessity of going back, either by a formal or a virtual recapitulation, to suggest again all the heads of discussion which had been temporarily dismissed, and to deliver their cumulative weight upon the souls of the people. In a word, it is by means of the conclusion that the unity of the discourse evinces itself.

There may indeed be, especially in expository sermons, a continuous application where each topic is addressed to the conscience as soon as the exposition develops it. In such cases the final conclusion will be shorter, because the work of application has been already in part done. But even here a general conclusion will usually be best, to gather up the collective effect of the whole; because the partial applications made in the current of the discourse will be of special parts of the truth to special ends.

The conclusion may be one of five kinds. The first is formed by introducing the more general truth under which the proposition of the sermon is comprehended. This particular truth is thus made a stepping-stone for ascending to some higher and wider point of view, whence a more impressive prospect is seen of the importance and the relations of the duty to which the text tends. The subject of discourse may be, for instance, God's special providence. This will be defined, and then, in the main discussion, demonstrated. The preacher may then, in his conclusion, show that the denial of this doctrine is practically equivalent to