

of an instantaneous effort. The vitality of thought is singularly stimulated by this necessity of instantaneous production, by this actual necessity of self-expression and of communication to other minds." It has the advantage, moreover, of not rigidly confining the preacher to what has been premeditated, but allowing him, like Chrysostom, to introduce remarks in the literal sense *ex tempore*—thoughts which may either be flashed into his mind with unusual vividness under the excitement of preaching, or which may be suggested by what goes on at the time. A preacher presents himself to an audience under a great advantage when he stands up to *speak* to them—to enter into that friendly relation which speaking implies. There is something in this, when modestly and respectfully done, that bespeaks their favourable consideration—unless their consciences shrink from plain faithful dealing, or unless their pride disdains the compulsion to listen, or unless a painful experience of that mode of preaching compels them to anticipate a mere outpouring of vapour instead of a rich and solid repast.

Undoubtedly, the general judgment of the Christian Church is against the reading of sermons. The practice is inconsistent with the purpose of preaching; it interferes with it as a free, living force; preaching becomes a somewhat dull intellectual operation, instead of a process in which every force and faculty of the preacher is applied to move the entire nature of his hearers. A young preacher deliberately adopting this method publicly confesses his weakness—owns himself unable to preach in the manner most in harmony with the nature of the ordinance and most fitted to accomplish its ends.

Yet there may be legitimate exceptions. In judging of such cases some consideration requires to be had (1) of the *temperament* of individual preachers, (2) of the nature of the *subject*, and (3) of the nature of the *audience* and the *occasion*.

1. In regard to individual temperament. There may in individuals be qualities of temperament that divest the reading of sermons of the faults that are commonly associated with it. There may be unusual animation of spirit and of voice, and unusual emotional susceptibility, so that the feelings of the speaker cannot but go along with the thoughts expressed in the discourse—his whole machinery, so to speak, being set in motion together. If to this gift of temperament there be added remarkable thinking power, and remarkable power of illustration and application, a read discourse, instead of being from that circumstance subject to drawbacks, will be an extraordinary

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treat. Such, emphatically, was the case with Chalmers, and such is the case, too, with other preachers that could be named. As the countrywoman said of Chalmers, his was *fell* reading. The case of Chalmers was the more remarkable that the range of his emotion was so wide and its intensity so great. There are instances of preachers, however, with a smaller range, and a lower tone of emotion, to whose temperament reading is suitable, because, as they read, the emotion which they are wont to express is readily roused in them. Perhaps we may say that Jonathan Edwards was a man of this type. He had neither the blazing impetuosity nor the wide range of Chalmers. But under his calm self-possessed manner lay a deep fountain of feeling, and it welled out calmly but powerfully with his favourite subjects of preaching. In general, for *read* sermons, three things may be laid down as absolutely indispensable: first, lively tones of voice; second, vigorous style; and third, interesting and rousing thoughts. If the preacher have a monotonous voice and a heavy style, if his thoughts are commonplace, and withal the sermon is long, it is no wonder if in popular estimation a read sermon becomes a synonym for dulness, a tax on the patience, and a temptation to sleep.

Again, there are temperaments to which the method of *reciting* seems well adapted. Such temperaments are not uncommon in France. The habitual liveliness of the French character, and the great amount of gesticulation with which the French speak, put the practice of reading sermons *hors de combat* in that country. On the other hand, their fondness for pointed, brilliant, epigrammatic diction, makes French orators unwilling to trust themselves to extemporaneous utterance. Recitation, therefore, has been the usual practice of the great French preachers. And, for the most part, they seem to have been able to do what is so difficult for English preachers—throw their soul into their recited sermons, feel intensely as they went along. But even they were not beyond that sense of bondage which is so apt to prevail when success depends on the memory. “Which was the best sermon you ever preached?” some one once asked of Massillon. “That which I knew the best,” was the significant reply. Bourdaloue, whose memory was less to be trusted, felt himself compelled to fall in with the practice; although, it is said, afraid lest the sight of the congregation should make him forget his lesson, he was compelled to preach with closed eyes. At the present day, however, a strong feeling has begun to prevail in France in favour of more extem-

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