

the extemporary form. Sermons could not then be wholly written, as they generally consisted of expositions of Scripture commonly of the lesson last read (as being most fresh in the memory of the people); and two or three sermons were often delivered successively in the same service.<sup>1</sup> Origen is thought to have fully introduced the extemporary mode. Notices of this method are found in the writings of Augustine and Chrysostom; whose frequency of preaching naturally gave them this freedom; and whose incessant Ministerial activity rendered it morally impossible, that they could have *always written* their sermons. At the same time plain notices are found in the writings of the Fathers, of sermons written—not only for the preacher's own use, but for more general advantage.<sup>2</sup> Burnet mentions the practice of reading at the Reformation era; yet Latimer's honest "plainness of speech," and the memorials of some of his contemporaries, furnish evidence of the opposite usage.<sup>3</sup>

Archbishop Secker, after discussing the question of written and extempore sermons, recommends written sketches, combined with extempore delivery, as "a middle way used by some of our predecessors,"<sup>4</sup> and adds—"perhaps duly managed, this would be the best."<sup>5</sup> The scheme, argument, and application of the discourse are given, without needless anxiety to preserve the precise letter of the composition. This indeed is adopted, when naturally occurring to the mind; otherwise the matter is clothed in the garb, which the present moment supplies. This plan seems to combine the advantages of the two schemes—restraining within the bounds of chastised feeling and well-digested arrangement, without the shackles of a written composition. The memory is exercised without painful anxiety: while the mind is left free to the excitement of the feelings of the

<sup>1</sup> After the reading of the Gospel, the Presbyters exhorting the people, one by one, not all at once; and after all the Bishop, as it is fitting for the Master to do. Cave's *Primitive Christianity*.

<sup>2</sup> Some hints in the writings of Augustine and Gregory refer to the custom of their sermons being written and read to the people, when they were prevented from preaching in person; which shows that the custom of reading was not wholly unknown.

<sup>3</sup> See some references in Budd on Infant Baptism, pp. 474, 475.

<sup>4</sup> Such as Bishop Bull. See his *Life* by Nelson, p. 59. Burnet gives some excellent rules for the attainment of this exercise. *Pastoral Care*, ch. ix. Compare Fenelon's *Dialogues*. Erasmus traces the practice to the Fathers—"Tutum est capita sermonis in charta notata habere ad manum, quod in Psalmos aliquot fecisse videtur Augustinus; et haud scio, an in omnes, quanquam vir memoria ad prodigium usque felici."

<sup>5</sup> *Charges*, p. 287–291.

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moment, in dependence upon Divine assistance. And this freedom must undoubtedly be claimed, of not being restricted to the letter of our premeditated sentiments. A richer unction of the spirit may reasonably be expected at the moment of preaching, after public and united prayer, while standing up in the immediate presence of God as an ambassador for Christ, beyond what has been previously vouchsafed in the study. As regards means however, 'a man cannot expect a good habit of preaching thus, without much study and experience. Young beginners should use themselves to a more exact and elaborate way. When a good style and expression is first learned by perusing, it will afterwards be more easily retained in discoursing.'<sup>1</sup> No lack either of matter or expression needs generally be apprehended in a well-digested and arranged subject.<sup>2</sup> "Of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak;" 'nor will the preacher be able to repeat a tenth part of the truths which God has communicated to him, while meditating upon his text.'<sup>3</sup> Increasing interest, aided by practice, will also gradually remove difficulties; and that 'vehement simplicity,' which Cecil justly defined to be 'true eloquence,'<sup>4</sup> will characterize our preaching, even amidst much humbling and most profitable experience of Ministerial weakness. If parliamentary or forensic speakers have attained an uninterrupted fluency of expression, even while "leaning to their own understanding;" much more if the Lord means to employ this habit in his service may we assure ourselves of a competent measure of spiritual ability, in the use of the appointed means, and in dependence on his promised aid. And never are we better fitted for our work, than while cherishing a deep-toned recollection—"Without me ye can do nothing."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wilkins' Eccles. p. 203.

<sup>2</sup> ————Cui lecta potenter erit res,  
Nec facundia deseret hunc, nec lucidus ordo;  
Verbaque provisam rem non invita sequuntur.

Hor. de Arte Poet.

'Whose mind soever is fully possessed with the fervent desire to know good things, and with the dearest charity to infuse the knowledge of them into others—when *such a man would speak*, his words, like so many nimble and air servitors, trip about him at command, and in well-ordered files, as he would wish, fall aptly into their own places.' Milton.

<sup>3</sup> Act of Synod of Berne, ch. xl. quoted in Fletcher's Portrait of St. Paul.

<sup>4</sup> Cecil's Remains.

<sup>5</sup> John xv. 5. Professor Campbell seems scarcely to recognize this practice in the