The Sermon Methods

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tent of the Christian religion is of such a nature that it is either completely received by faith or completely rejected since the mysteries of revealed truth are not recognized as such by human reason. The perverted reason of man acknowledges as true only the religions of the Law, or of works, while with all its might it contends against the religion of faith. On the other hand, Holy Scripture condemns as false all religions of works, just as it condemns unregenerate human reason as blind, dead, and absolutely unable to perceive the things of the Spirit of God, 1 Cor. 2, 14.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER.

(To be continued.)

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(Concluded.)

When the theme is the chief thought *expressed* in the text and the parts are *deductions* from the text, then we have an *analytic-synthetic* outline. When the theme is a thought *derived* by way of deduction from the chief thought of the text and the parts are those *expressed* in the text, then we have a *synthetic-analytic* outline.

James M. Hoppin, who was a pupil of August Neander and professor in Yale College, wrote a book on homiletics in 1869, revising it in 1881. Speaking of the *form* of the sermon, he says: "We come now, under this general subject of the classification of sermons according to their treatment and form, to say a few words upon the actual *form* of the sermon. While the classification of sermons in this respect has been with all homiletical writers a fruitful one, we have already suggested that the simplest method of classification would be, first, into the textual; secondly, the topical, sometimes called 'subject sermons'; thirdly, the textual-topical. A more elaborate classification which was proposed would regard the form of the sermon as depending upon the manner of treating the text, the manner of treating the subject, and the general rhetorical treatment and would bring into view the various kinds of textual, topical, expository, doctrinal, ethical, historical, argumentative, meditative, and hortatory sermons. But we will not enter into this wide field or repeat what has been said on these points and will notice only for a moment *the two grand divisions of the textual and the topical forms of sermon.*

"If we were asked what style of sermonizing should be mainly recommended, not by any means as the exclusive one, but as the most ordinary method of preaching, year in and year out, for a pastor's regular work of instruction from the pulpit, we should answer that, without making it a dry excogitation of the Scriptures and without

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bibliolatry, — for the Bible itself is but a book [?], which ought not to
be worshiped, and only He whom it reveals should be adored, — the
expository method should be employed, or, rather, what might be
called the 'textual' as contrasted with the 'topical' style of discourse.
We use 'textual' here not precisely in its technical sense.

"A 'textual sermon,' technically, is one that follows in its treat-
ment closely the words of the text, clause by clause and word by word.
We would employ 'textual' here rather in the sense of 'text-preaching,'
that is, making the text the absolute subject of the sermon and not
an abstract subject evolved from the text; holding firmly to the text,
drawing the real material, the real thought, and the real inspiration
from the word of Scripture. It is, in fact, 'Biblical preaching' instead
of 'theme-preaching.' It takes a long time to be emancipated from
the tyranny of the topical or theme sermon, which has dominated over
our pulpits. This, we grant, has done a great work and will continue
to do so; the most cultivated audiences are best pleased with it and
also profited by it; but its exclusive use has engendered many errors
of preaching and has sometimes led astray from the true object of
preaching. It has, above all, spoiled variety and freedom. Topical
preaching, as has been hinted, draws from the text a particular theme
or, what is often the case, takes a topic before taking a text and
makes that topic the subject of the sermon. Here is its unity. It
requires an artistic handling, like an oration or a piece of sculpture.
It is a perfect discourse, formed upon the rules of art. It is some-
thing, after all, outside of the text, though it should be in strict accor-
dance with it. It requires brief texts, containing complete themes,
and themes capable of didactic development. But this style of ser-
monizing is very apt to lead to a neglect of the Word of God. The
sermon, in fact, hangs on the proposition or topic instead of on the
text; and how many wrong topics, such as the text never taught, have
been drawn out to serve as themes of this kind of sermon; *e. g.*, by
a German preacher, who made the subject of Acts 26, 24: 'Festus said
with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning hath
made thee mad': 'The doubtful and perilous character of religious
enthusiasm.' A sermon should spring up from the Word of God
studied within the circle of a minister's pastoral duties, needs, and
requirements; and while sometimes the topic will be suggested before
the text (though we think this is not a good rule) and there should
be all proper freedom here, since the pastor has two books to study,
his Bible and his people, yet when the text is once chosen, however
and whenever done, then it should be treated with honor and thought-
ful attention as the utterance of God upon the specific duty or subject
in hand. Topical preaching is needed for the wants and emergencies
of the pulpit and will continue in vogue, and all will follow it who
aim at a high standard of scientific excellence in sermonizing; but

uniformly pursued, it will present the human side of preaching predominantly, will hide Christ, and injure the cause of Christian truth; and a return to nature, to Biblical preaching, to the teachings of the 'Spirit of Christ,' will constitute a real reform.

"Textual preaching, in the sense in which we have explained it, where the text forms the actual basis of discourse and is immediately and mainly treated of, enables the preacher to interpret the Word of God more closely; which course is in harmony with the main theory already advanced, that preaching is primarily interpretation — interpretation not of a dead, but living sort, adapted to spiritual awakening and persuasion. It also enables the preacher to employ texts that comprise longer or shorter portions of Scripture; and this is the beauty of this method, that the texts may be longer and thus embrace a wider range of truth, like the parables of our Lord or like the extended figures in the 15th chapter of Luke, 1 Cor. 9, 24—27, Eph. 6, 14—17; or narrative and historical texts; or texts containing some important subject fully treated, as 1 Cor. 13, and Mark 10, 33—50, where humility is the underlying lesson of the whole passage; or meditative texts, as many of the psalms, in which the inmost religious life of the writer is set forth. The textual discourse honors the Word of God by thus keeping near to it and dwelling ever upon it. It gradually develops the riches of the text, following it out in its details, not perhaps running into a formal proposition and argument, but at the same time not disregarding the ground truth of the passage (*das innere Faktum*), the essential unity of the thought, the broad generalization which comprehends the whole. It has a true subject, which may be usually defined by some general title, such as 'The Centurion's Faith,' 'The Healing of the Blind Man,' 'The Golden Rule,' 'The New Commandment.' Thus the teaching is brought directly out of the Scriptures in an original way, in all its spiritual power, with nothing, as it were, of human invention intervening between the living Word and the living hearts of men. This is apt to be edifying preaching, feeding souls upon the Bread of Life. This kind of preaching, mixing in with it the topical, so that the sermon shall partake of the synthetic as well as analytic character, is a profitable form of sermonizing. This was F. W. Robertson's usual way of preaching. While we would thus strongly urge a return to Biblical preaching, as coming back again to the living springs of power, as being the most spiritual as well as the most ancient form of pulpit address, continuing until in the fourth and fifth centuries Greek speculation and rhetoric began to destroy the free exposition of Scripture and the inartificial style of interlocutory address of homily and to mold the discourse upon the formal principles of Greek art, yet we would not be understood as denying art and philosophy their proper place in the sermon."

Hoppin calls that textual or analytic preaching which "follows

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in treatment closely the words of the text, clause by clause and word by word," while topical or synthetic preaching is that "which draws from the text a particular theme" and then treats it independently of the text, the sermon being a "discourse formed upon the rules of art" and "something, after all, outside of the text." Yet Hoppin admits that all preaching should be "in strict accordance with the text"; therefore he prefers the kind of preaching in which "the sermon shall partake of the synthetic as well as analytic character." The objection which Hoppin makes against the topical, or synthetic, method of sermonizing is done away with as soon as we define the synthetic method to be that method which also takes its thoughts from the text, that is, the thoughts which are *implied* in the text and *derived* from the text *by way of deduction*.

Hering, in his book *Die Lehre von der Predigt*, printed in 1897, says: "Man nennt nach aelterem homiletischem Sprachgebrauch jene Predigt, die nur aus dem Texte schoepft, analytische Predigt; man koennte sie ebensowohl und vielleicht mit mehr Recht eine exegetisierende nennen, weil sie von der Auslegung des einzelnen zur Anwendung fortschreitet. Diese zweite Gattung der Predigt nennt man wegen der Verknuepfung des Schriftinhalts mit Gesichtspunkten, die nicht unmittelbar aus dem Text entnommen, sondern nach der homiletischen Absicht gewachlt sind, synthetisch. Sie darf so auch aus dem Grunde heissen, weil sie, in ihrer eigenen Gliederung, sei diese in Dispositionen ausgesprochen oder nicht, eine Synthesis, einen Aufbau zum Ganzen, darstellt. Der Wert dieser Schulterminologie ist aber nicht zu ueberschaetzen; denn der Unterschied fliesst. Im Sinne des streng logischen Begriffs ist keine Predigt rein analytisch; das kann nur rein exegetische Entfaltung des Textgedankens sein. Jede praktisch angewandte Exegese fuehrt aber schon notwendig zur Verknuepfung, das ist, zur Synthesis, nur dass diese sich in der analytischen Predigt aufs einzelne beschraenkt, nicht beherrschendes, gestaltendes Prinzip der Rede wird. Andererseits fuehrt jede synthetische Predigt, sofern sie schriftaufschliessend sich mit ihrem Texte beschaeftigt, ihn nicht bloss tangentenartig, sondern zentral anfasst, auch Elemente der Analyse mit sich."

The use of the terms analytic and synthetic is not new, nor is the description of the methods as we have given it new. In his book *Erlaeuterung ueber die Praecepta Homiletica*, printed in 1746, Johann Jakob Rambach gives the following definition and explanation of the two sermon methods: —

"*In methodo disponendi analytica propositio continet summam textus tractandi, quae deinde in praecipuas suas partes resolvitur.* Was *dispositionem analyticam* betrifft, welche die leichteste und natuerlichste ist, so begreift die Proposition die *summam* des Textes in sich. Bei Verfertigung einer Proposition kommt es bei der

methodo analytica auf zwei Fragen an: 1) Wovon handelt der Text?
2) Wie handelt er davon? . . . Diese Art, die Disposition zu erlaeu-
tern, hat man einige Regeln zu merken, welche zugleich die akkurate
Einteilung der Predigt dirigieren. Es sind deren vier: *Regula 1:*
Quot insunt textui primariae materiae, tot fiant partes. Regula 2:
Quot unius materiae adsunt distincta genera, tot fiant partes.
Regula 3: Quot sunt distinctae species, tot fiant partes. Regula 4:
Quot insunt textui primaria argumenta, tot fiant partes.

"*In methodo synthetica doctrina aliqua ex textu eruitur, ac se-*
cundum partes et argumenta a textu suppeditata pertractatur, ubi
partim ad thema tractandum, partim ad tractandi modum attenden-
dum est. Das *fundamentum dispositionis syntheticae* ist also ein
porisma, ein *consectarium,* das entweder *expressis verbis* in dem Text
lieget oder doch *per bonam consequentiam* daraus hergeleitet wer-
den kann."

It is not a correct definition of a *porisma* to say that it expresses
a thought that is either found in the text *expressis verbis* or that can
be derived from it; a *porisma* is only the latter. This statement by
Rambach somewhat confuses his definition of the synthetic method.
That his definition lacks clarity can also be seen from the fact that
Rambach says: "Je naeher die synthetischen Predigten der *methodo*
analytica kommen oder eine analytische Erklaerung des Textes zum
Grunde haben, desto besser sind sie." Furthermore, his somewhat
confused thinking in reference to the synthetic method is seen in
the following quotation, in which he is still speaking of the synthetic
method: "Ein jeder *pars* wird zuvoerderst aus dem Text hergeleitet,
in welchem die Sache entweder klar und deutlich lieget oder doch
durch eine richtige Folge aus demselben kann hergeleitet werden."

Reu, in his *Homiletics,* gives the following definitions: "When
its edifying materials have been lifted from the text and are now to
be built up into the sermon, a double mode of procedure is possible.
We may either take the main thought of the text as our theme and
divide this thought into its constituent parts without regard to the
divisions of the text, or we may let the divisions of the text determine
the divisions of the sermon and by combining them into a unity
arrive at our theme. The former is the *synthetic,* or 'topical,' the
latter the *analytic,* or 'textual,' sermon method. *In following either*
method, it is important to remember that the subject-matter of the
sermon must be none other than that given in the text; for what has
been said in Part II concerning the relation of the sermon to the text
must always be kept in mind. Hence the term 'textual' as over
against 'topical,' to denote the analytic sermon method, is open to
misconception. But while in both methods the materials of the text
are used, in the *synthetic* method the text furnishes only the main
thought or theme, which forms the source for the material of the

sermon and from which its divisions are derived according to the rules of logic and rhetoric, independently of the text. The text is indeed drawn upon again and again in the development of the various divisions, but it does not determine the divisions themselves. In the *analytic* method, on the contrary, the text furnishes both the main thought and the material as such and determines the divisions of the sermon. In the former method the main thought is found first; in the latter the main thought, combining into one the various divisions, is found last. In the former we begin with the unity of the main thought of the text and deduce from it the variety of materials contained therein; in the latter we start with the variety of materials found in the text and ascend to the unity of the main thought in which they are gathered together. In the former method therefore we proceed from a unity in which all is already gathered up (synthesis) to variety; in the latter we proceed from a gathering up of the variety in the text (analysis) to unity."

To summarize: A thorough study of the text on the basis of the original text, the context, and parallel passages of Scripture must form the groundwork, the basis, for any sermon method. This is the *conditio sine qua non* of good sermonizing, since in any case the text, *that* text which the preacher has chosen for his sermon, must be preached. Now, if the text is to be preached, one must preach either the thoughts *expressed* in the text or the thoughts *deduced* from the text; anything else would be outside of the text, though not necessarily outside of the Scriptures. Therefore there can be only two sermon methods: that which uses what the text states *expressis verbis* (analytic) or that which uses what is deduced from the text (synthetic). Often the two methods are combined to form an analytic-synthetic or a synthetic-analytic outline; that, however, does not give us a new method, but only a combination of two existing methods. Whichever method is used, the specific thought of the text, either *expressed* in the text or *derived* from the chief thought of the text by a *porisma,* is the theme of the sermon; the parts also in both methods are taken from the text and are never simply derived from dogmatics or a commentary or a parallel passage of Scripture. While the analytic method, adhering closely to the thoughts expressed in the text, will not admit of variety, except in the *wording* of the theme and the parts, the synthetic method, deducing thoughts from the text, admits of much variety of thought in the presentation. Even the rule that the synthetic theme must conform to the chief thought of the text does not exclude a variety of thought in the synthetic theme. The analytic method is the easier method; the synthetic method calls for far more homiletic skill. When using the synthetic method, the preacher must be careful not to make deductions which cannot easily be shown to be deductions, but which are so far-fetched that, after

all, he would be preaching not what is in the text, but what is out-
side of the text.

Finally, it must be said that the application of the rules laid
down for the analytic and the synthetic sermon methods should, in
the outline, *not extend beyond the theme and the chief divisions;*
it should not be extended to the subdivisions, lest we unnecessarily
restrict and burden the homiletic conscience and frustrate the very
purpose of homiletics, which is not an art for art's sake, but an art
which is to serve the very definite purpose of expounding and apply-
ing a text of Scripture as the text demands it and the needs of the
hearers require it. *In the final analysis every sermon will contain
both analysis and synthesis.*

The definitions which have been given of the two sermon methods,
the analytic and the synthetic, form a convenient, workable basis for
good sermonizing, and the preacher who makes his outlines accord-
ingly will not fail to make good outlines, write good sermons, and, if
his delivery be good, preach to congregations that will be benefited
by his preaching and will be glad to hear him again and again. And,
indeed, we should strive after, and cultivate, good preaching; *"denn
es ist kein Ding, das die Leute mehr bei der Kirche behaelt denn die
gute Predigt."* (Apology, Art. XXIV.) JOHN H. C. FRITZ.

Dispositionen über die von der Synodalkonferenz angenommene Serie alttestamentlicher Texte.

Erster Sonntag nach Trinitatis.
Spr. 11, 23—28.

Auch unter Christen gibt es viele, die meinen, sie dürften ihre irdi-
schen Güter ganz nach eigenem Belieben gebrauchen; diese Güter ge-
hörten eben ihnen, und deren Gebrauch stehe in keiner Beziehung zu
ihrem Seelenleben oder ihrem Verhältnis zu Gott. Das ist aber falsch;
und wer so denkt, steht in großer Gefahr. Deshalb betrachten wir:

Wie wichtig es ist, daß wir unsere irdischen Güter recht gebrauchen.

1. **Der verkehrte Gebrauch derselben stürzt den
   Menschen ins Unglück.**
2. **Der rechte Gebrauch vermehrt sein Glück.**

1.

A. Die Weise des selbstsüchtigen Weltmenschen.
Der Weltmensch prahlt gerne mit seinem Geschäftssinn und seinen Ge-
schäftsmethoden. Er glaubt, er habe die rechte Weise gefunden, seine
Güter zu gebrauchen und zu mehren. Wie macht er es denn? So: