

## DIVISION

### { CHAPTER IV. }

#### METHODS OF DIVISION.,

There are five methods of Disposition or Division commonly employed in the arrangement of subject matter of sermons, viz.: the Analytical or textual; the Synthetical or topical; the Propositional; the Interrogative; and the Expository. To these others might be added, such as the Accommodational, Historical, Narrative, etc.,-but their mode of arrangement would come under one of these five mentioned.

Really there are but two methods, the textual and the topical, because every sermon is intended either to explain a text or discuss a topic. Propositional or Interrogative sermons are really topical, and Expository must necessarily be textual. We adhere, however, because customary, to the five methods specified, and take them up separately.

#### I. THE ANALYTICAL METHOD. (*Textual.*)

1. **Its Meaning.** By this is meant the separation of the text into its various parts for purposes of examination and consideration, and founding on these the heads of discourse.

2. **Its Value.** The analytical method is:

(a.) **Eminently Scriptural** because it deals directly with the text.

(b.) **Very Instructive.** It opens up what may be concealed, by taking texts apart for minute examination.

(c.) **Easily remembered** by both preacher and hearer, as all the main points are in the text.

(d.) **Clothes the sermon with authority.** Its purpose is to show not the preacher's learning, but what God says to men. It is the mode therefore preachers should most frequently use.

3. **Its methods.** (a.) Select the chief words in the text, separate them and make each the basis of a head of discourse. This applies to simple texts and may be thus illustrated:

Matt. xxi: 28. "Son, | go work | to-day | in my vineyard."

There are four chief words in this text, - Son, Work, To-day, and Vineyard. These should be separated as above shown and made the basis of the heads of the sermon, - thus:

- I. The Title Given, "Son."
- II. The Duty Required, "Go work."
- III. The Time Specified "To-day."
- IV. The Place Designated, "In my vineyard."

Other examples would be as follows :

Luke xv : 2. "This man | receiveth sinners | and eateth with them."

The chief words of this text are, - This Man, Sinners, and Eateth. This gives three heads of discourse, viz. :

- I. The Receiver, "This man," *i.e.*, Christ.
- II. The Received, "Sinners."

III. The Reception, "Eateth with them," *i.e.*, a friendly welcome.

Matt. xi : 28. "Come unto me | all ye that labor and are heavy laden | and I will give you rest."

We cannot draw a dividing line after "labor," because that and "heavy-laden" are sub-divisions of the same expression. So we have but three chief heads, viz. ;

I. The person inviting. "Come unto me," -Christ's call.

II. The people invited. "Ye that labor and are heavy laden."

III. The promise given. "I will give you rest."

Gal. v: 6. "Faith | which worketh | by love."

Here we have a definition or description of Christian life.

I. In its principle. "Faith."

II. In its operation. "Which worketh."

III. In its motive. "By love."

The analytical method may therefore be described as the act of taking texts apart for the purposes of examination and consideration, and then putting them together again in homiletical order and phraseology. This phraseology should not always be similar, but should be varied in style of expression.

Thus Heb. ii : 18. "For that he himself | hath suffered being tempted | he is able to succor them that are tempted"

VERBAL ANALYSIS.

The usual phraseology would be :

- I. The person spoken of.
- II. The fact mentioned, and
- III. The assurance given.

But it would give desirable variety to express them in this manner:

- I. The Saviour subjected to temptation.
- II. Suffering through that subjection.
- III. Succoring through that suffering.

This order of parts need not be the order in the text, but should be governed by rules of logic, propriety, and fitness. In the first text given above, the word "Son" might be taken not simply as a Title, but as a Motive for obedience, in which case it would properly form the last instead of the first head of the sermon.

Some examples will illustrate this:

Isa. xii: 3. "Therefore with joy I shall ye draw water I out of the wells of salvation."

Here the order must be reversed, as we must first speak of the wells before we describe the act of drawing water from them-or the delight with which it is done.

Eph. ii: 8. "By grace I are ye saved I through faith."

In this text a logical treatment requires the last term must be discussed before the second. It then presents the way of salvation:

- I. In its Source, "By grace."
- II. Its Process, "Through faith."
- III. Its Result, "Ye are saved."

John xiii: 17. "If ye know | these things, | happy are ye | if ye do them."

Here the second becomes first, and the third becomes last.

- I. The things referred to.
- II. Our knowledge of them.
- III. Our obedience to them.
- IV. Our happiness in them.

In such verbal analysis only such words as form a distinct part or idea should be so separated and used.

*b.* Where texts are complex, *i.e.*, of two or more distinct parts or clauses, these should be separated and made bases of the division. If, for example, the twenty-ninth verse be added to the text, Matt. xxi: 28, as above given, it would read and be divided or separated as follows :

Matt. xxi: 28-29. "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. | He answered and said I will not: | but afterward he repented and went."

Here we have three distinct parts or clauses, and on these, instead of the chief words, the division is based, and we have:

- I. The Requirement, "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard."
- II. The Refusal, "He answered and said, I will not."
- III. The Repentance, "But afterward he repented and went."

In this case the verbal analysis would appear in the sub-divisions of the main divisions.

So, if the text should be Matt. viii : 3, the division would depend on how much of the verse was taken as the text. It might read and be divided thus:

"And Jesus put forth his hand and touched him, | saying, I will; be thou clean."

This would give two main divisions or heads of discourse:

- I. What Jesus did: "Put forth his hand and touched him."
- II. What Jesus said: "I will; be thou clean."

But if the whole verse constitutes the text, the division or separation of the text would be:

"And Jesus put forth his hand and touched him, saying, I will ; be thou clean. | And immediately his leprosy was cleansed."

We would still have but two heads, but the division would be at a different point and would give us :

- I. The methods of Christ's healing. 1. By touch. 2. By word.
- II. The efficacy of them. 1. The Leper was cleansed. 2. Immediately.

Another example will be found in Acts ix : 6. If we take only Saul's question it would be divided according to its chief words, thus:

"Lord, what | wilt thou | have me | to do ?",

- I. It was submissive, "Wilt thou."
- II. Unconditional, " Lord, what?"
- III. It was personal, "Have me."
- IV. It was practical, "To do."

But if the entire verse is taken, the division must be based on its clauses, thus:

"And he trembling and astonished | said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? | And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city and it shall be told thee what thou must do."

Here are three clauses requiring separate treatment:

- I. The state of his mind.
- II. The question he asked.
- III. The reply he received.

A fourth example of division by clauses is this:

Rom. x: 9. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, | thou shalt be saved."

At first it may seem there ought to be a dividing line drawn also after the name Jesus, which would divide the text into three parts. That would be incorrect, inasmuch as what precedes and follows that point are of the same class. Both are conditions on which the assurance in the last clause is based. So we have but two main divisions:

- I. The two conditions. 1. Faith. 2. Confession.
- II. The assurance. "Thou shalt be saved."

We add another illustration:

Rom. viii : 32. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, | how shall he not with him also **freely** give us all things? "

This would seem to require at least four divisions, yet a careful examination will disclose but two parts:

- I. The fact stated. God gave his Son for us.
- II. The inference drawn. Then nothing we need will be withheld.

When a text has been determined upon it is easy to note whether it is a simple, *i.e.*, single statement, truth, or fact, or whether it has several parts or clauses which should be taken separately. In the latter case the division should be according to these clauses, while in the former it should be according to the chief words.

## II. THE SYNTHETICAL METHOD. (*Topical.*)

1. **Its meaning.** The term Synthetical is derived from the Greek words *σύν* (together) and *τίθημι* (to put or place.) It is the opposite of analysis, which is derived from *αναλύω* (to separate or take apart). The Analytical method separates the text into its distinct parts, while the synthetical brings together from various sources whatever bears upon the text and aids in its presentation.

As the analytical is also called the *textual* method because it deals directly with the words of the text, so the synthetical is also called the *topical* because it deals with the topic or theme of the sermon rather than with the text itself. It treats the text as a whole, and makes the general ideas which its discussion requires or its presentation suggests, the basis of its divisions.



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2. **Its advantages.** This method has its advantages.

(a.) It insures **unity**, as the sermon is confined to one topic.

(b.) It allows a more **thorough discussion**, being of more logical character and completeness.

(c.) The preacher is **less restrained** by it. It gives opportunity for the use of the stores of knowledge the preacher has acquired, and for the exercise of any special gifts or talents he may possess.

(d.) Being largely argumentative, the arguments can be **readily reproduced** in other sermons teaching the same doctrine or duty.

This is not to encourage the frequent repetition of sermons, but circumstances will arise which require an unexpected withholding of the sermon prepared, and the substitution of another on very short notice.

3. **Its use.** This method applies to and suits

(a.) Texts which do not admit of the analytical treatment, such as short texts containing a single fact or truth; *e.g.*, "God is love,"-"Jesus wept,"-"Pray without ceasing,"-"Quench not the spirit," etc.

While the analytical treatment might be used and we could speak first of the Person mentioned, and secondly of the fact declared, etc., it is better to deal with the topic they present; *e.g.*, The character of God; The tears of Christ; Constancy in prayer; Our treatment of the Holy Spirit, etc., in the fuller way topical treatment allows.

Even many texts which are not short are yet

so simple in statement and plain in their meaning as to make any analysis or separation unnecessary and injudicious, and can be more profitably treated in the topical way.

Example: John iv : 9. "Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans."

This requires no analysis to bring out its meaning, but can be much better treated topically, thus:

The evil of prejudice:

- I. It is very common.
- II. Very powerful.
- III. Very mischievous.

Another example is found in Eph. iv: 13. "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

This is very full, and seems to demand analysis that its richness may be fully developed and displayed. But it is a gem which would be injured by the cutting, and should be treated in its entirety, thus:

Perfect Manhood:

- I. In the measure of its stature.
- II. In the means of its development.
- III. In the marks of its attainment.
- IV. In the motives of its pursuit.

(b.) Topical sermons, *i.e.*, sermons on some specific doctrine or duty, or on some prevalent error or sin in the community. In such cases

the preacher will need a number of Scripture passages as proofs, and therefore should not be confined to one as in a textual sermon. Care must, however, be taken that the passage chosen for the text fairly teaches the topic or theme, and justifies the treatment and argument of the sermon.

4. **Its treatment.** This method admits of variety of treatment.

(a.) **If it be a doctrine-like justification-the atonement, etc.,** the divisions and chief heads may be

I. Its Meaning. II. Its Proof. III. Its Effect.

Or the Fatherhood of God - the love of Christ, etc.

I. Its Demonstration. II. Its Delights. III. Its Demands.

Or God's compassion, forbearance, etc.

I. Its Lines. II. Its Limitations. III. Its Lessons.

(b.) **If it be a festival,** like Christmas, Easter, Reformation, etc.

I. The facts described. II. The truths established. III. The lessons inferred.

(c.) **If it be some duty or virtue** enjoined, like charity, humility, etc.

I. The Duty Explained. II. Exemplified. III. Enforced. Or I. Its Meaning. II. Its Manifestations. III. Its Motives.

(d.) **If some prevalent sin,** like profanity, fraud, strife, etc.

1. Its Prevalence. II. Its Wickedness. III.

Its Consequences. Or I. Its Cause. II. Its Character. III. Its Cure. Or I. Its Source. II. Its Course. III. Its End.

These topics will suggest a number of texts, each of which would be equally suitable and appropriate. The introduction should set forth the occasion and meaning of the text, and lead easily and naturally to the topic and its treatment.