

NOW I AM FOUND: THE RECOVERY OF THE “LOST” YALE LECTURES
AND THE LEGACY OF ENGAGING EXPOSITION

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Abstract

This investigation examines the “lost” Yale lectures of John Broadus, author of *Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*. Broadus’ argues preaching should engage the audience on every front—emotional, physical, and spiritual. He demonstrates a keen awareness of communication theory as well as changing audience demands. As a result, this analysis replaces contemporary misperceptions of lackluster exposition with powerful proclamation.

The Need for Recovery

Perhaps no other Southern Baptist deserves rediscovery in our seminaries and studies more than John A. Broadus (1827-1895). His labors as a preacher transformed pulpits from the didactic and domineering style of an earlier period to a conversational and practical style that sought to drive each listener to a powerful impulse of the will. Like Demosthenes, Broadus sought to take control of his audience and move them through extensive scholarship and dense textual material with unusual simplicity. Those who heard Broadus said the “secret of his power” lay in his ability to articulate the essence of the text with a current of unusual graphic intensity. Reflecting upon the contribution and influence of Broadus, Edgar Folk wrote, “He was not only a prince in Israel, but he was the very king of our Southern Baptist Israel.”¹

Broadus’ *magnum opus*, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* (PDS), displays superior knowledge and informed theory on the nature and substance of preaching. His contribution to homiletics is unparalleled in Baptist circles. Considered an “Olympian in the history of preaching,” John Broadus stands among the most widely read authors in the history of homiletics.² V. L. Stanfield, Broadus scholar and homiletician wrote, “During the last half of the nineteenth century in America, no Baptist preacher enjoyed greater popular fame than did John Albert Broadus. By his seminary colleagues, by denominational leaders, by competent critics, and by appreciative congregations, he was ranked as one of the leading preachers of his time.”³ F. R. Weber, preaching historian, wrote, “Yet were preachers everywhere to profit by Dr. Broadus’s high respect for biblical, expository preaching and the

¹ Edgar E. Folk, “As a Preacher.” *Seminary Magazine* April 1895, 373.

² Larsen, *The Company of Preachers*, 551.

³ See *Favorite Sermons of John A. Broadus*, ed. with an introduction by V. L. Stanfield (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1959), 1.

high standards that he sets in his homiletical writings, there would be less complaint about empty churches in America, Scotland, England and elsewhere.”⁴

In January of 1889, Broadus’ powerful preaching earned him an invitation to deliver the influential Lyman Beecher Lectures on Preaching at Yale Divinity School. Phillips Brooks, P. T. Forsyth, J. H. Jowett number among the historic names added to the distinguished list of lecturers at Yale. From the beginning, the eminent preachers who have been invited to lecture have created from their lectures the content of their homiletic text. Because of the eminence of the preachers who have delivered these lectures, the Yale lectures have achieved unequalled distinction among the various homiletics lectureships. Among the influential lectures within the field of homiletics, whether Hester, Payton, Mullins, Sprunt, or Warrack, none can claim the influence of the Yale lectureship.⁵

Since Beecher’s first address, Broadus displayed an interest in the Yale lectures. As soon as the lectures appeared in print, Broadus added the text to his homiletics syllabus. His delivery of the lectures marked the crest of over forty years experience as a preacher and thirty years as a professor of homiletics. Almost twenty years had elapsed since the first printing of *PDS*. The structure and function of his lectures revealed a seasoned understanding of the minister, and the content and purpose of his addresses delivered to the university in 1889 differed in style from the first edition of his homiletics manual. His lectures at Yale filled the aisles of the Marquand Chapel with chairs and left many standing in the corners and peering in from outside. Broadus contributed to the “highest enthusiasm” the lectures had experienced since Henry Ward Beecher’s first delivery nearly two decades earlier.

The example and principles he established in his fifty years as preacher-teacher had a deep impact on his successors. E. C. Dargan, his understudy and successor in the chair of homiletics observed:

The form and style of his published sermons present an interesting study. But, as intimated already, they give a very inadequate idea of his actual preaching.... In structure his sermons were clear, felicitous, attractive without cumbrous formality or minute subdivision. He was homiletical in spirit without bondage to the letter.... But after all perhaps the most characteristic, as it was certainly the most moving element of his oratory, was that inimitable pathos which his good taste and sound judgment kept in due restraint while it subdued and melted the hearers. There was in his preaching at its best a strange, poetic, unearthly charm which language cannot express. This came from the man himself.⁶

Evangelical preaching remains indebted to the passions and discipline that reigned in the works of the Southern Baptist Convention’s first professor of homiletics. Broadus displayed an unwavering commitment to the authority of scripture, and he provided the functional and formal elements necessary for the proper delivery of the sermon. From his first edition in 1870

⁴ *A History of Preaching in Britain and America*, vol. 3 (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1957), 405.

⁵ See Warren Wiersbe, *Walking With the Giants* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), 203. As cited in Steve Reagles, “One Century After the 1889 Yale Lectures: A Reflection on Broadus’ Homiletical Thought.” *Preaching* 5 (1989): 32.

⁶ “John Albert Broadus—Scholar and Preacher,” 173-174.

to the lost lectures of 1889, Broadus remained committed to the clear, conversational style that characterized his preaching and embodied the art and discipline of proper expository proclamation.

But while *PDS* remains among the most popular and influential books on preaching, the later half of the twentieth century witnessed the dissipation of agreed upon norms for pulpit proclamation and the landscape of Christian preaching waned from monolith to smorgasbord. Thus, the classical-rhetorical model has fallen to a postmodern pulpit. Yet traditional homiletical theory continues to shape and define the Protestant pulpit. The resurgence of this expository methodology sparked this preacher's interest in the subject of homiletics as a young minister. It was through this methodology I heard the substance of the gospel and was shaped in my Christian beliefs. But new scholarship on Broadus and his contributions—homiletic or otherwise—remains alarmingly absent.

Canon One: “Materials of Preaching” in Broadus’ Homiletic

The press reported Broadus’ lecture delivery was marked by a conversational tone that condensed his mature thought and practical advice for the young preachers in the audience. Furthermore, instead of receiving the content of a formal treatise on homiletics, the audience received a detailed and personal accounting of the preacher’s ability to appropriately prepare and deliver sermons, as the beginning of another century approached.

This paper will evaluate distinctive elements within the first canon of Broadus’ framework for homiletics, “Materials for Preaching.” The content includes two components of his Yale lecture series, “On Freshness in Preaching” and “On Sensation Preaching.” The material included in these lecture manuscripts provides a renewed perspective on Broadus’ preaching and style in the pulpit. He addresses the “helps” and “cautions” associated with the inventiveness of freshness and the creativity of sensational preaching. As a result, the lecture content casts light on Broadus’ late development and articulation of his homiletic.

On Freshness in Preaching

For Broadus, the term “freshness” relates to the preacher’s selection of content and the handling of that content within the style and delivery of the sermon. Freshness communicates an ability the preacher retains to insure relevance. Some contemporary preachers exaggerated the importance of “freshness” in preaching, Broadus argues. The use of novels and newspaper articles as the basis of directing the subject of preaching apparently led Broadus to introduce the subject with a sweeping accusation, “They say the age demands perpetual freshness.”⁷ But, Broadus continues, “New hearers will be constantly needing the old truths.” Those who need preaching the most, he continues, need the basic content of all preaching: the evangelical gospel.

⁷ He follows his claim with a quotation from the Greek NT, *kainotepon ti*, which translated means, “something new.” Cf., Acts 17:21. See “On Freshness in Preaching,” 1. This notebook contains the script for what Broadus apparently considered a brief lecture, indicating in the top corner of the first page, “Shorter today.” Ibid.

He asserts, “[The] basis of our preaching cannot be new—the same gospel, the same human nature . . . , the same human life.”⁸

Following his introductory statement, Broadus admits, “But while some are seeking these old truths, others we must go after. [These include the] impenitent, lukewarm, indifferent, [and] gospel hardened. We must arrest attention, interest, convince, impress.” Even the most devout believer, he contends, must hear the “old doctrines” with “new aspects and relations,” and the preacher must develop “fresh ways of exhibiting and applying them.” Broadus appeals here to the model of Scripture, stating that many biblical authors had the “same general ideas, but differently presented by every writer, and by the same writer at different times.” Additionally, he cites Christ’s example in the synoptic gospels as well as the difference in John’s Gospel. Finally, he notes the Pauline example of Paul’s “four groups of Epistles.” He concludes, “If then there is occasion to check the passions for novelty in some young preachers, on the other hand, we may urge upon all of the value of freshness, and the benefit of learning how to maintain freshness through life.”⁹

As an aged veteran pastor, Broadus understood the urgency of maintaining a serious discipline of preparation for preaching. As a minister ages, he must not lose the sense of vigor that characterizes the young preacher. But the young preacher, he warns, often fails to understand the importance of freshness in preaching. “They are themselves a novelty to the people, awakening kindly curiosity,” he notes, comparing the young pastor to a new book at the bookstore, which arouses curiosity by way of its position of novelty. Broadus argues that the age and vitality of the young minister provides the mystique of freshness, without the power associated with the disciplines of a prepared minister. He contends that this novelty will wane and leave both the preacher and parishioner wanting.

For the young preacher, Broadus considered the passion for awakening curiosity in the minds of the listener as an “investment” that would return to the old preacher when freshness was no longer a physical trait. For the aging pastor, Broadus contends, freshness is a necessary discipline. At the beginning of a pastor’s experience, he says, “The themes of preaching are all new to the young minister.” And the lack of discipline, he contends, causes many preachers to “wear out by middle age,” concluding that many arrive in their ministry at “the dead line of 50,” or he asks, “Is it 40?” Many older ministers are neglected “partly through the fault of the people,” he says, “but largely their own fault.” He asserts, “They cannot be fresh, and it is often chiefly because they did not begin right, form right habits,” concluding, “And how soon a young preacher’s habits are fixed.”

Broadus continues by providing several aids by which the disciplined preacher may command freshness in preaching. First, the preacher maintains freshness in preaching by studying the Scriptural text. Broadus encourages the “general study of Scripture” as well as the “special study of the text chosen [to preach] and its connection [to the context].” Using himself as example, Broadus indicates that his primary means of maintaining freshness is reading the Scriptures in general. “Above all,” he says, “Let the preacher study his Bible.” He warns the preacher not to seek the “novelties of interpretation,” but the “exact meaning.” Broadus continues, “The idea of strict interpretation of every text alarms many, as limiting from range . . . ,

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid, 2.

but in fact it greatly increases variety.” He counsels the young preacher, “Do but confine the sermon to the specific topic of [the] text, the exact aspect of some subject which [the text] presents.” Here Broadus provides a clear break from the didactic tradition of his contemporaries who often preached thematic or theological topical sermons.

Second, Broadus asserts that young preachers command freshness in preaching by studying Systematic theology. Broadus believes that a correction of historic proportion is forthcoming. He says, “The history of human thought, government, and life is largely made up of reactions, and fresh in your day doctrinal preaching will again be highly acceptable.” Broadus admonishes, “Certainly it would in many pulpits now be something quite fresh. But apart from doctrinal sermons proper, there must be much doctrinal matter in almost all sermons. The teachings of the Bible as to the leading departments of religious truth and life must be the chief material of all preaching that deserves the name.” Preaching, in Broadus’ view, must anchor itself in the text of the Scriptures with accompanying theological truths.

Broadus stresses the importance of theology in preaching, “The substance of our theology must be as old as the Bible.” But his concerns ran deeper than strict exposition and theological interpretation of the text. A trained linguist and exegete, Broadus understood the necessity of a philosophy of interpretation that anchors meaning and authority in the text and the intent of the author. And keenly aware of the need for contextualization in preaching, he cautions the preacher against a destructive hermeneutic. He explains, “But the progress of human experience and reflection leads us to reinterpret the Bible. Whether more wisely or less wisely, and altered views of philosophy lead us to construct new systems of Bible truth.” As his system of doctrine builds in the preacher, Broadus believed, the herald must progress in his ability to address common issues in the pulpit. He says, “Reflect profoundly upon the commonplaces of religious truth.” He warns, “The pulpit often makes the mistake of giving us common thoughts about deep things, when what we need would be deep thought about common things.” Then, Broadus presses the preacher to meditation, “We get deep thoughts about common things only by penetrating and persevering reflection. Over and over again, as the years go on, a man must meditate upon those practical aspects and departments of Gospel truth, which are so often wanted to meet men’s spiritual needs that they become superficially familiar, while yet they will brighten, or open up to him that patiently thinks.” In conclusion, Broadus contends that the preacher must combine both the new and innovative with the doctrines of old, “In general we must know how to connect old thoughts with new. ‘Every scribe who has become a disciple to the kingdom of heaven is like a man—a householder, who flings out from his storehouse new things and old.’¹⁰ Even Jesus, [had] unlimited resources, [yet He] taught much that was old. First and seen commonly [in His teaching], the Golden Rule. Every disciple can and must give something that is new.” Broadus believed that the preacher possessed the moral duty to bring fresh and engaging theological dialogue into the pulpit for the people.

Third, Broadus commends the young preacher to gain freshness by studying “occasions,” or the “reality of things.” This study, he warns, should not be an end in itself, but a means to understand the need for application of the biblical text. He advises, “Study the general condition of the congregation. Reflect upon all special occurrences of religious interest and upon any occurrences of secular interest that may furnish illustration or call for passing application or

¹⁰ See Mt 13:52.

remark.” Additionally, making a habit of studying common circumstances allows the preacher to understand the need of the contemporary listener. Moreover, the condition of the listener affects the means through which truth will be delivered. That is, as the preacher prepares the message, a sound knowledge of the audience allows the herald to adapt his message for a new situation. Broadus says, “Whenever you repeat a sermon on a new occasion go carefully over your notes beforehand, asking how this and that should be altered to suit the new situation, making additions, omissions, alterations, sometimes moving out in some quite new direction.” Broadus believed that the sermon should be filled with the “topics of the times,” and if lacking, the message would prove useless. He warns, “A sermon that suits all occasions equally well does not thoroughly suit any one of them.” Continuing, he challenges, “Compare [the] parable of the pounds with [the] parable of the talents, or compare [the] Sermon on the Mount with [the] Farewell Discourse, or Peter in Acts 2 and 3. Could the first epistle to the Colossians have been fitly sent to Philippi? Would Paul’s address on the Areopagus at Athens have been suitable on the stairs of the Tower Of Antonia at Jerusalem?”¹¹ Broadus argues the preacher should exercise discernment when preparing to preach the message for another audience. He says, “Take great pains about specific adaptation to the occasion.” Sometimes, he concludes, that adaptation of the sermon to a particular audience hinges on “apparently slight matters,” comparing the details of new alterations to the tendrils of a vine.

Fourth, Broadus entreats the preacher to maintain freshness in preaching through studying “individual cases.” Like a casebook, Broadus tells the preacher to keep a confidential logbook of cases. He compares this practice to that of a physician, lawyer, or other professional who keeps a journal. He urges the minister to keep a strictly private record of “cases,” keeping the documentation in an organized format, in order to develop an index with cross-references for future study. He says, “Thus you may gain much of the instruction derivable from the confessional, without its grave objections.” Broadus believed that the study of human nature in both the broad observational sense as well as individual case allowed the minister to better grasp a sense of the soul. He urged them to study humanity “in literature and in life,” reminding the preacher, “Lawyers and merchants frequently claim to know human nature better than ‘you gentlemen of the cloth.’” Not only will the journal enable the preacher to increase his knowledge of the soul, but Broadus persuades his listener to understand the subject’s perspective. “Get their views of human nature,” he says, since the subject often displays it in “certain painfully important aspects.” Of particular importance, Broadus says, is the recording and study of individual religious experiences, both before and after conversion. Additionally, one should pay attention to every conversation. He says, “A slight hint in conversation may sometimes start a train of thought that will make a fresh sermon, as they say of the homeopathic medicines, the slight suggestion may ‘set up a tendency,’ and diffuse itself through all that is cognate in your thinking.” Indeed, Broadus engages the preacher to visit the homes of his congregants, reflecting from house to house on each conversation. At the end of the day, he urges the pastor to make a note of the visits. Reflecting on these conversations later, he says, “Though only sometimes suggesting a whole sermon, such conversations will very often furnish single thoughts of great value to a sermon.” He warns, however, the preacher not to “go around

¹¹ Broadus often engages the student with biblical examples and uses them as a defense of his position. He considers the use of the Bible as one of the strongest forms of illustration because of the source.

preaching little sermons in the homes, but get them to talk; learn how.”¹² Thus, Broadus concludes, “Pastoral visiting pays the preacher ... if he knows how to listen as well as talk.”

Broadus’ fifth discipline for freshness may be found by studying “the age in which we live.” The preacher must understand both the strengths and weaknesses of the age, Broadus begins. Among the indicators of the age are found “healthy tendencies and diseases, illusions and well-founded hopes.” Also, the preacher must gauge the relationship of Christianity to his age. He must discern, Broadus says, “what the age needs from Christianity [as well as] what Christianity demands from the age.” The engaging expositor must know the “leading tendencies of the age,” he says. Broadus categorizes the three leading worldviews of the late nineteenth century: 1) Materialism, “linked with practical and mighty secularism,” 2) Pantheism, and 3) Agnosticism, “a new thing in phraseology and even to some extent in fact.” Broadus then critiques the “new” agnosticism, noting the presence of “plenty of ignorance in all ages, even something of confessed ignorance; but now [agnosticism boasts] a proud and haughty ignorance, a contented and contemptuous ignorance, a bold ‘don’t know,’ coupled with a plainly implied ‘don’t care,’ about things, which if real, are the highest of all things.” And building on these systems of thought, Broadus moves to the intellectual demand of his age—evolution.

In addition to studying the contemporary arguments of the academy, Broadus also looks within the church. He says, “With the limits of Christianity, we see prominent two opposing tendencies, the Broad Church and the High Church, each driven back to extremes by its stern gaze ahead at the opposite extreme.” The Broad Church movement, Broadus argues, is to be feared. He contends that the cry for Christian union “springs from the notion that doctrinal opinions are unimportant.” Standing opposed on the other side he identifies the “High Church tendency, seen in all our religious bodies.” In this lecture, Broadus displays a nimble aptitude and awareness of the flow of contemporary theology and ecclesiastical dynamics. But he warns the preacher, “Now what I am proposing is not so much that the preacher should make direct attack on the various tendencies of the times in a general way, especially not that he should prate about eminent or notorious men¹³ For preachers to peck at these men is surely bad taste and worse policy.” Broadus cites Whately to support to argument, “The errors of Romanism [are] regarded as having their foundation in human nature.” He continues, “The same thing is true of every ‘-ism’ that becomes current and lasting, it has its foundation in human nature; and not only in general human nature, but in the special tendencies of the times in which it grows popular.” Thus, Broadus concludes, “Then let us study the chief fabrics of contemporary thought, seeking to find from foundations in human nature, and especially in the wants, real or imaginary, of the present time; and let the results of our study appear, not in formal discussions through set discourses, but here and there in our ordinary sermons, as we gain a wholesome view, or as occasion arises from presenting it, that we may prepare men to see how Christianity really meets all real human wants.” In short, Broadus wants the preacher to serve as a positive force of restraint and fortification, not as a voice that serves to “perplex [the audience] with plausible errors.” His conclusion remains that the pastor must study religious thought in order to use the results in “practical preaching” to the congregation. The expositor, he asserts, “always takes hold of things present, even transient things, and penetrates through them to permanent, eternal

¹² He includes a note of comment on “My 2 old ladies in Charlottesville.” Ibid.

¹³ He cites as examples Stuart Mill, Spencer, Darwin, Tyndall, and Huxley.

principles, or if it begins with general principles, it always brings them to bear upon actual characters and living wants. Excellence in preaching must conform to this law.”

Finally, Broadus asks the preacher to maintain freshness in preaching by “studying ourselves.” This task may be accomplished first, he believes, by learning from one’s mistakes. He illustrates these mistakes with the image of a child falling as he learns to walk, a beginner learning to skate, and boys learning to play “base ball”(sic). Broadus admits that the youthful preacher will fail and make mistakes, but he questions why the seasoned preacher will not also learn from mistakes. Without discipline, Broadus argues, the veteran likely will adopt a stereotyped method of preaching. Furthermore, the habit will form the basis of how the preacher regularly preaches. Broadus admonishes the listener, “Cherish and cultivate a restless longing to preach better, and try frequently experiments in preaching differently.” Without this discipline, Broadus warned that preacher would possess within themselves a reservoir of potential that remains unused. He says, “I am persuaded, not as a matter of theory but of observation, that there is among preachers a great deal of latent power that never gets itself developed.”¹⁴ That power, Broadus believed, was never displayed in the strengths of an expository ministry, because the preacher would not develop the discipline. Second, the aging preacher must strive to maintain a competitive level of intellectual acumen. He says, “A minister should strive to cultivate and keep healthy his inventive faculty.” Broadus asks why the mind and intellect could not be cultivated. He says, “We speak of faculties, but the mind is really one.”¹⁵

As to the invention of thought and cultivating intellect, Broadus offers two suggestions. First, the preacher may cultivate thought by analysis. He tells the preacher to separate thoughts into other more specific thoughts. He suggests “making a thought branch, and branch again, till we have foliage and blossoms.” From the cultivation of analytical thought, Broadus believes, would come the power of invention. With the power of invention, he argues the preacher would possess the greater ability to treat subjects “commonly” by development from within rather than by accretion. Furthermore, he tells the preacher to take specific subjects, rather than general topics, and analyze them. From this treatment, he contends, the preacher would have “perpetual variety” in proclamation. Thus, the herald will build his message by enriching the mind as well as empowering his audience.

Second, the preacher invents thought by association of ideas. Broadus suggests four processes of association that may accomplish this task. Initially, the invention of thought may be accomplished by resemblance or contrast of similar ideas. Broadus instructs the students to group these ideas according to observed characteristic principles. Broadus cites as example the story of “Sir Isaac” with the “fall of the apple.” Through this process of grouping, Broadus suggests that the preacher may discover analogy. Through the analogy, he says, “We find imagery [and] illustration.” If the preacher discovers the relationship himself the preacher greatly benefits. He says, “Where we ourselves find the illustration, it is worth much more to us. It fits, like a man’s own armor, it interests like a woman’s own babe.” He continues, “By all means cultivate the habit of seeking and discerning moral and religious analogies to things physical or social. Even if the substance of a man’s religious thinking should exhibit no

¹⁴ He cites as examples W. D. Thomas and William Williams, one of the founders of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky. Furthermore, he uses his own experience in preaching to children.

¹⁵ He further says, “I find in books almost nothing as to cultivating power of invention.” Ibid.

improvement or variety, yet if he is constantly finding new and good illustration, his preaching will always have one important element of freshness.” The second process of discovering association of ideas is by argument or proof through inferences. Third, he suggests motives and application of ideas to the preaching project. Fourth, he describes the combination of “any or all of these as will accomplish our practical object.” He concludes, “Thus we build a discourse, as we build a house, with reference to its practical design.”¹⁶ And in the arrangement of thought the plan of the preacher forms a sermon or thought that will be better stated, he says, and by analysis and association the preacher finds thoughts that would not otherwise have come within his “horizon.”¹⁷ Finally he tells the preacher, “Fasten your mind on the subject, by an intense effort of the will, and compel yourself to the task of analysis or association, as the case may be.”¹⁸

As Broadus concludes his lecture on freshness, he offers practical advice for cultivating inventive powers. First, he advises them to use physical stimulants, including tea or coffee. He says, “In general, our inventive powers are more active when we are stimulated.” But better than physical stimuli, Broadus argues, is the stimulation of the mind. The preacher may acquire this stimulation from conversation, he says, “with persons equal or superior, where we listen well. Not only do you thus gain helpful suggestions, germs of thought, but your faculties are stimulated.” He continues, “Even light and gay conversation both stimulates and trains our inventive powers. Wit and humor, repartee, depend on the quick observation and seizing of remote analogies, and thus they increase one’s ability to invent illustration &c.” Additionally he adds, “The graceful transitions from topic to topic which are observable in social conversation form an additional discipline for the preacher.”¹⁹ Second, mental stimulus may be gained through reading books “suited to this end.”²⁰ He continues, “Truly great books have all these properties. Let us try by experiment to find what sort of books quicken our thinking, and not merely those that furnish seed-thoughts, but those that set the mind agoing (sic).” Finally, he concludes, “Remember, that our very best, our richest invention is not achieved in preparing next Sunday’s sermons, but in general reading, conversation, reflection, when the mind is quiet, throws off its accustomed burdens, and springs up elastic.” He cites William Jay and his own experience as example. He says, “Ah! The ministers that maintain habitual commerce with such books as these, and such men and women as I have referred to, will keep up mental activity, and their discourses will always have some freshness.”

Freshness in preaching may be obtained through the study of the Scriptural text, Systematic theology, by studying occasions, individual cases, the contemporary age, and by the study of self. Broadus concludes his lecture abruptly, “Encourage trains of thought.” And as

¹⁶ Broadus strikes an example of a type of practical construction in a “material invention, a machine for picking cotton.” Ibid.

¹⁷ He includes some practical instruction for the listener, saying, “Now much of this work of association is done casually; a leading thought occupies the mind, and the mind works according to its own laws.” Additionally he indicates that Robert Hall prepared his sermons in this manner. Ibid.

¹⁸ This quotation is an addition found on the opposing page (15) and includes a reference to Gross (sp.?) Alexander, *Homiletic Review*, January 1895. Broadus cites Alexander, “Attention is the mother of invention.” This reference, however, reveals that Broadus later edited these manuscripts. The citation from 1895 illustrates Broadus’ freshness in preparation. He died in March, 1895.

¹⁹ Edits following the sentence read, “Omitted in the first lecture about visiting ladies. Manners, English style, mental stimulus.” Ibid.

²⁰ He warns, “Many favorite books do little more than to entertain, some only inform, or at best instruct, but others stimulate.” Ibid.

thoughts are compiled and analyzed he tells the preacher to “fix in memory, or in the notebook, the ideas that arise.” Anticipating the reaction of the busied herald, Broadus finishes, “You cannot get time for this? You must.”²¹

On Sensation Preaching

Broadus draws a distinction between the duty to provide freshness in preaching and the danger of sensationalism in preaching. Addressing the issue of sensational preaching, Broadus begins his lecture with cautions for the expositor. First, he says, “Certainly great harm has sometimes been directly done by sensational preaching.”²² He begins with two remarks concerning sensational preaching. First, it proves difficult to distinguish between freshness in preaching and sensationalism. But he cautions, “So as to many other things, e.g. plagiarism, honesty in trade, distinction between right to conceal and right to deceive, [we] must therefore not shrink from efforts to avoid what is wrong, because sometimes [there is] difficulty in drawing the line.” Second, Broadus contends there are no universal standards of what is sensational. Acceptable preaching, he argues, “depends partly on the character of the preacher, partly on the audience, partly on the times.”²³ Therefore, he argues that the preacher must exercise caution when employing the use of creativity in delivery. He suggests several concerns for the expositor.

Principles of Caution. Broadus believes the preacher’s duty rests in his ability to compel his audience to be concerned with eternal truths. He says, “Preachers must do all they can with propriety do, to make preaching attract attention, wake men up, compel them to listen, think, remember. For this we have the highest sanction.” Citing examples from Jesus’ interaction with the Pharisees, Broadus appeals to the use of provocative rhetoric. He supports his argument with NT examples, “Our Lord said things that to the Jews were in the highest degree paradoxical (e.g., “Hear and understand. Not that which goeth into the mouth,” &c.). [His statements were] amazing, revolutionary. [The] Pharisees [were] offended [and the] disciples privately begged explanation. “The Sabbath was made for man,” &c.” He continues, “These truths were in themselves startling, so opposed to fixed popular beliefs. The paradox is here in the nature of the case. But there are numerous other passages in which a truth that might have been stated in plain and measured terms, he has chosen to state in a surprising, startling way, for the very purpose of securing attention.”²⁴

Remarking on the use of striking language, Broadus tells his audience, “Remember that Jesus was a street preacher, a field preacher. Some great scholars cannot understand him.”²⁵ And from the example of Jesus’ rhetoric, Broadus concludes, “Thus we see that it is right, if wisely done, to strike and startle men.” Broadus anticipates some may inquire as to the potential

²¹ Emphasis added by underlining. Ibid.

²² “On Sensation Preaching,” 1.

²³ He ends this caution with a word of wisdom, “Tolerate in others what you would not do [yourself], at least endure it.” Ibid.

²⁴ He continues to remark on the words of Christ, arguing that they stirred up “compelling remembrance” as well as “subsequent reflection.” He includes examples, “the right cheek” and “go with him twain.” Ibid., 3, with odd pagination only in this notebook.

²⁵ He also includes the following statement, “So the foreign missionary.” It is not possible to discern if here he speaks of Jesus, or if he is reflecting upon the contemporary missionary. Ibid.

danger of misinterpretation, but he responds, “Jesus himself [was] often misunderstood.” Thus, for Broadus, the possibility of misunderstanding by no means proves that the use of elevated tone or language is inappropriate. Yet he warns the preacher to avoid “extravagant phrases,” in as much as they may mislead the audience, thus distinguishing between misleading and metaphorical.²⁶

Broadus exercises care to discern for the audience the distinction between the use of elevated language and using language merely to draw a crowd. He says, “Jesus did not go out as ‘a boy preacher,’ Quite the contrary, [he] commanded many of the healed and their friends to ‘tell no man.’” He continues, “No thoughtful person would think of saying that Jesus was a sensation preacher.”²⁷ Broadus offers three considerations when the preacher employs the use of startling language. First, the preacher must possess an absorbing spiritual aim and purpose. Second, he must maintain a reverence for the sacred. He says, “[This reverence] will exclude every thought or expression that would be really out of harmony, and will assimilate to itself whatever is said or done.” Third, the herald must possess “a whole-souled earnestness, which will seize upon every paradoxical thought, every unexpected image, every startling phrase, and bear them along, in its own current, as a mountain torrent sweeps down rocks and trees.” Broadus concludes, “It follows that any topic or statement which cannot be thus completely overpowered and borne along by the strong religious feeling and spiritual aim, should be avoided.” From these considerations, Broadus continues, “It clearly seems to follow that nothing can be properly introduced, merely because it would draw the people to the place of preaching, or interest and gratify them in a general way, if it is really a thing separate and apart from the supreme spiritual purpose and the reigning devout feeling.” Many topics, he argues, might create attention or entertain the listener, but that would not contribute to interest in spiritual truth. “Such topics are surely out of place,” he asserts.

The aim of every preacher remains to draw interest into the spiritual realm. Thus, any discourse that is introduced by the herald should point toward and not divert attention from things spiritual. During preparation, the expositor must consider the views and feelings of his audience as well as his own. He warns, “Many a thought, illustration, or expression which in [the preacher’s] mind might be readily and completely absorbed into the spiritual feeling and purpose, would keep the attention of numerous hearers turned quite away, because they care so much more for *it* than for spiritual things.”²⁸ Moreover, many Christians, Broadus argues, are very easily drawn away from the spiritual when secular subjects are discussed. “It is then to be feared that some sermons,” he says, “and numerous parts of sermons, that are attractive, entertaining, perhaps even in some respects impressive, yet do no real good, and may actually lessen the total spiritual effect of the speaker’s ministry.”

The effect of reducing the spiritual content of the message through employing entertainment-motivated content should be strongly discouraged, Broadus demands. Mocking

²⁶ Broadus says, “Remember [the phrase] ‘the world would not contain the books.’” Also, he notes “they had all things common,” which Broadus argues, “widely misunderstood, men taking it as unquestionable that the early Christians and Jesus were communists.” Ibid.

²⁷ Moving from Jesus to an apostolic example, Broadus includes an apostolic example. He argues that Paul, “Though he seemed so revolutionary,” never was purposed to draw a crowd, yet “his language sometimes [piles] Ossa upon Pelion,” Ibid., 7.

²⁸ Emphasis added. Ibid.

the questioner, he asks, “‘But anything is better than empty pews.’ Is that certainly so?” Broadus responds, “Pews may be crowded with people who are drawn and held by some quite irreligious interest, and are sent away more completely out of sympathy with spiritual things than they came. A crowded church may thus do little or no real good, may even do positive harm.”²⁹ For Broadus the expositor must maintain a level of spiritual content, he argues, and while the increase of the congregation may be a good indication of blessing, it may be presumed upon false pretenses. Broadus then calls attention to those who attend church without any spiritual interests.³⁰ Broadus argues, “But suppose the minister should publicly invite young men to come to his church on [the grounds of finding a young lady], it is almost impossible that persons thus induced to attend should receive wholesome spiritual impressions. Now the evil may not be so gross and obvious, and yet may be quite as real, when the minister allures hearers by speaking of any matters which he cannot make really conducive to spiritual interest, especially if they be matters in themselves very attractive to undevout human nature, and apt to distract attention from spiritual things.”³¹ Thus, he concludes that not everything that draws a crowd is to be commended.

Principles of Caution Applied. Broadus moves from the theoretical to the practical and applies these principles to preaching. As above, he admits the room for difference of opinion among preachers. In this section of his lecture, Broadus reveals a great awareness of the various materials used for preaching in the late nineteenth century pulpit.

Broadus begins with the popular practice of advertising a sermon that addresses “special vices” or “popular amusements.”³² He recalls the popularity of this genre during the waning of Protestant fervor in 17th century Germany. He says, “When the Reformation fervor had declined, and there was little of hearty devoutness.”³³ Broadus did believe that preaching against specific sins was appropriate from the pulpit. However, he asks, “How much better a brief admonition, which may be repeated at intervals, than a formal and previously announced discourse on such a subject?”³⁴

Broadus offers four grounds for avoiding preaching “advertised sermons” against popular amusements. First, he warns against the danger of exaggeration.³⁵ He says, “If on the

²⁹ Broadus continues, “People say, ‘That’s the sort of preacher, I tell you, he draws a large congregation.’ But how does he draw them, and what does he do for them? On the other hand, a man may be at least somewhat benefited by a church to which he seldom goes, if it represents for him only what he knows to be reverent and spiritual,” Ibid., 11.

³⁰ As examples, he says, “[Consider] a young man to escort a lady, or a husband only to please his wife, looking at watch, and some visitors receive spiritual benefit. Even those who came to mock sometimes remain to pray. A certain class of young men may go to a particular church because there are many pretty girls there, and possibly some visitors may be religiously benefited.” Ibid., 13.

³¹ Broadus also includes as suspect the minister who often changes religious positions. He says, “When he seems to be on the point of breaking with his religious body, or abandoning orthodoxy, this fact will attract a heightened attention to his preaching Suppose a minister [was] to dally with doubt, to play with heterodoxy, partly because it will make him notorious, and draw crowds to hear him! Alas, there is reason to fear that this is sometimes the case,” Ibid., 15.

³² He sets the context of the subject with a brief history of this genre. He argues that this form of preaching was popularized among Protestants after the Reformation. Ibid.

³³ He notes, “Dr. Kerfoot says there were sermons on the mode of dressing the hair, on the use of tobacco, &c.,” Ibid., 15.

³⁴ He mentions, for example, cigarette smoking among boys. Ibid., 17.

³⁵ Specifically, he suggests “cards, theaters, waltzing, &c.,” Ibid.

other hand you try to be elaborately discriminating, you will be interpreted by some as not really opposing.” Broadus believed that bringing the single theme to the pulpit dignified the practice, “making it the theme of formal discussion.” Occasional references, he believed, do “more good and less harm.” In the end, preaching a message against particular amusement “arouses all its advocates into earnest defense.” Second, there is a danger of intellectual arrogance.³⁶ Third, Broadus identifies the “danger of being unjust to the community.” Finally, he warns that advertising the “haunts of vice” leads to the awakening of prurient curiosities.³⁷

Second, he cautions against promoting sermons addressing horrific subjects. Again, Broadus says that the preacher may make proper reference to recent events that specifically interest the listener, but sermons on “the latest horror” should be avoided. Making reference to the horrific by way of illustration or of particular application may be done frequently, Broadus says. He continues, “This [has been] habitually done by many of the most deeply devout ministers, and with excellent results. It awakens a lively interest and shows that the pastor is what people call a live man, and that his preaching ‘means business.’” The illustration and application of such a topic must not be of such a nature that it distracts attention from “properly religious truth and duty,” Broadus argues.³⁸ But he is careful to warn the preacher never to turn some application or recent occurrence into the theme of his advertised sermon.

Third, Broadus warns against advertised sermons on contemporary art or literature. Many preachers have referenced a popular novel or picture that is locally exhibited.³⁹ But making art the theme of a sermon distracts from its intended end. Broadus, perhaps here more than elsewhere, allows for the preachers to make the judgment. However, Broadus clearly states his opinion, “I am persuaded that it would do more good, and less harm, to make only casual mention [of the work.]” Finally, he says, “And sometimes it is best to make no mention of a book, if the people would not otherwise know of it.”⁴⁰

Fourth, Broadus addresses the general question of advertising subjects of preaching. Broadus begins by citing the example of Beecher, and explains the constant temptation to select a statement for the sermon title that will arouse an interest in the subject and not the sermon itself. Broadus argues that if the preacher is preoccupied with the “reporter” in the preparation of the title, it is likely he will be similarly preoccupied throughout the sermon. He warns the preacher of this distraction, as it will “tend to vitiate the tone of your discourse.” Broadus continues, “Remember . . . that to advertise “taking” subjects, and to make sermons such as the daily paper will ask for, is to foster a growing appetite.” The end of this genre of sermon, he argues, is a commitment toward a “downward movement, which must go faster, and lower, every year.”

³⁶ Broadus mentions, “Ruffner (but do not this time mention where),” and a “Student in [a] debating society (Columbia University),” who mentions “going round” in New York or Paris. Ibid.

³⁷ He illustrates, “A series of sermons some years ago, widely published and read (Talmage), no doubt led thousands,” Ibid.

³⁸ Broadus references Midway (perhaps a city or church) and Phillips Brooks, “when I heard him,” Ibid.

³⁹ Broadus mentions three sermons he recalls in Louisville, Kentucky, on Robert Elsmers, noted novelist. Ibid.

⁴⁰ He cites an example of the little known volume, *The Prince of the House of David*. Ibid.

Fifth, Broadus discusses preaching and politics. This question, Broadus believes, is of great importance in a democratic and free country. While there are extremes in the pulpit with respect to politics, Broadus argues that it is the duty of every Christian man to speak of politics.⁴¹ But he carefully says, “The subject is not too good to be preached upon, and not too bad. Politics has no right to claim exemption from discussion in the pulpit.” He continues, “Ministers certainly have an abstract right to discuss political topics, or any other topics, for religion has relation to everything in the whole realm of life and of thought. There is absolutely no subject in regard to which it may with propriety be said, that of this subject a religious instructor has no right to speak.” But for Broadus the deeper concern is the spiritual tone and focus of the sermon. The preacher must commit himself to revere the Scriptures and eternal things above the temporal. “The real question is on the point of prudence . . . , of doing the greatest possible good with the least possible attendant harm,” he cautions.⁴² Broadus adds several considerations upon which the preacher ought to reflect. First, he says that many congregations contain, “or ought to,” persons belonging to different political parties. He asks, “How can you undertake to discuss an approaching election, or any question of party politics, without doing more harm than good?”⁴³ He discusses contemporary political issues such as prohibition and the Civil War.⁴⁴

Broadus identifies two attendant evils associated with preaching “party politics.” First, those whose political position is attacked may be driven from preaching. Worse still, the offended may continue attending without regarding the preacher as a spiritual guide but rather a political one. Second, those whose political position is supported may also be in danger for the same reason mentioned above. Namely, those interested would also be distracted by politics and be drawn away from properly religious subjects. Broadus cautions, “And precisely when the preacher feels most inclined to preach on such questions, as at the approach of a great election, precisely then the danger is the greatest that he will do more harm than good.”

Broadus continues addressing the concern of politics in the pulpit with an appeal to Christ. He says, “The Founder of Christianity once answered inquiries as to a political question, tribute to Caesar, his enemies thought they were propounding a hopeless dilemma. His answer, [solved] a real difficulty about a question half political and half religious.”⁴⁵ Additionally, he considers another explanation. He asks, “Suppose Jesus and Paul had discussed directly political

⁴¹ He follows his introductory comment with the short comment, “Always vote.” Ibid., 23.

⁴² To this statement he adds, “I am fond of saying that the problem of usefulness in life is that + - = (plus + minus = equal), i.e., that the good done is more apt to become manifest, if the harm done often remains unknown.” Ibid., 25.

⁴³ Broadus pays particular attention to the practice of preaching before, during, and after the “Great Civil War.” He says, “In some portions of the country the practice of preaching on party politics has been more or less continued since the war because it had become habitual, or because the congregation were too nearly all on the conquering side, or because some of the war issues were regarded as still continuing to demand attention.” Then, he asks, “How has it been within your observation as to the Episcopal Church? Have they increased much within 20 years? Has it been partly because the Episcopal clergy do not preach on party politics?” Ibid.

⁴⁴ With respect to prohibition, he cautions, “There are obvious perils in this respect attending the great Prohibition movement, particularly when it takes the form of a “third party.” If it be held that the reasons for this movement are so cogent as to demand that it be pushed at all hazards, pushed by the churches as such, and advocated in the pulpits, then great pains should assuredly be taken to minimize these obvious attendant perils.” Ibid., 27.

⁴⁵ Broadus appeals to another case, however, where Christ did not so respond, “But see how he acted in another case—the 5000: he withdrew, and next day [he was found] in the synagogue.” Ibid.

questions. Did they abstain through lack of courage, or through wisdom?"⁴⁶ But he concludes with a question and an answer. He asks, "How can the preacher do most to further patriotism, and political purity? By preaching general principles of political duty, in the light of Christian teaching and in the impulse of Christian motives, and sometimes indicating, as he passes on, some particular application, where he is satisfied it will do decided good, and little or no harm."

Sixth, Broadus addresses the subject of applause for preaching. During the golden age of preaching, Chrysostom describes throngs of peoples, standing and cheering. Just as the crowds would applaud at the theatre or the races, so the congregation would cheer "rapturously" at good preaching. In those days, he explains, it was the fashion to attend church, and so the crowds would applaud, "in the same spirit as at places of amusement." Broadus deduces, "Surely this was not a good thing, surely Chrysostom had a right to be grieved."

Broadus believed the resurgence of applause in church came from popular lectures given in meeting houses and church buildings. These lectures, given for the benefit of some benevolent object, or for public meetings held in a church to consider some question of social reform. Additionally, he considers the possibility of the business meetings of some ecclesiastical convention, missionary society, Sunday School celebrations, or other related gathering. He surmises, "Thus, people gradually became accustomed to applauding in a house of worship. At length, when a ministry would break into some outburst of passionate denunciation or appeal." From this association, Broadus argues, the churches began to applaud in similar manner when they heard some "finely entertaining passage [or] perhaps amusing bit," and like the lectures, they break into applause. He notes that many churches have not yet begun to applaud the sermon, but Broadus expresses concern for churches and those who say, "[It is] better to applaud than go to sleep." But he asks, is it the necessary alternative?⁴⁷ Broadus concludes that the preacher should arouse the audience without a need for applause. He says, "You can tell when people are specifically interested, without applause. And your hearers can discern that those around them are interested, through a subtle sympathy. One good listener [is all a preacher needs]."

Seventh, Broadus addresses the employment of humor in preaching. To surprise of many in the conservative pulpit, Broadus positively responds to the use of humor in preaching. He affirmatively says, "[Preaching is] quite allowable within moderate limits." But Broadus' position is carefully articulated. As above, the driving force behind every aspect of the sermon must be reverence and holiness. Thus, the preacher using humor must use it "where natural and spontaneous ... and where he easily and promptly reacts or returns to the serious." Moreover, the preacher also bears the responsibility for the mood of the audience. He insists the herald must "completely [carry] the congregation back with him." But Broadus distinctly objects to the use of "calculated" or gratuitous humor, "practiced for its own sake." Indeed, if the preacher is

⁴⁶ Further, Broadus grants that some "competent and distinguished and useful ministers" have preached on political issues, but so few have done it well, perhaps only those should.

⁴⁷ Broadus asks a several rhetorical questions. First, "Is it certain that for a few persons sometimes to sleep during a sermon would be as great an evil as that they should be kept awake by the kind of preaching that excites applause?" He responds, "Better get sleepy sometimes in reading your Bible on Sunday, than keep yourself awake on Sunday with a novel." And again one asks "But is not a speaker helped by applause?" He responds, "Yes, he is helped in some respects. There is danger if he leans on it, and looks to it, speaking to the heels." *Ibid.*, 33.

employing the use of humor “so frequently as to keep people looking out for it,” Broadus argues that overuse would be disastrous. He says, “Some would hope and others would dread,” and either way, humor would be the force behind the sermon, and not religious truth. Furthermore, if the expositor uses “course humor,” he says, “Then of necessity many persons will be repelled from the preacher, some repelled from the gospel.” He continues, “Let me repeat ... the harm done is apt to remain largely concealed from the minister.”⁴⁸

The expositor must remember that reverence must guard all that is done in the pulpit. He says, “Many good people cannot so readily as yourself pass ‘from grave to gay,’ and especially cannot with facility return ‘from lively to severe.’” Broadus warns, “If you have on some occasion been betrayed into too pronounced or too frequent humor, check up next time.”

In addition to what is done in the pulpit, Broadus also comments on the minister and his private humor. “A preacher should beware of producing humorous effects through irreverence,” he says. When in private, a certain “class of ministry” is to be faulted, but in public too many there will not make allowance for such a failure, he says. And to that, he addresses the tone of sacred rhetoric. He says, “Let it be added that too familiar a tone in speaking of sacred things, especially in speaking of God, is a fault rather frequently observed.”⁴⁹

Broadus concludes by warning, “Abjure and abhor all real irreverence in the pulpit.” He asks, “But some will say, can any man, in our restless times, keep his church regularly well filled, and his hearers attentive, who preaches only?” Broadus responds, “Yes, [see] Taylor, Hall, Liddon, and Spurgeon, yes, and many unknown to fame, and innocent of notoriety, but blessed with lifelong usefulness, wise in winning souls, and feeding the Master’s flock, and destines at last to hear him say, Well done &c.”

Broadus concludes his lecture by warning the preacher to avoid everything that could be offensive or truly objectionable. He says, “What then shall be the conclusion of this whole matter? If you are naturally inclined to what others regard as sensational preaching, carefully avoid everything that would be really objectionable.” Broadus employs as his operative motif that preaching should first be spiritual and also reverent. “Avoid also such frequency as might repel. Cultivate reverence, spirituality, earnestness, and good taste.”

Broadus is careful, however, not to discourage the human personality of the preacher. If the herald guards himself against frivolity, he says, “You can ... act out your bent.” He closes, “Consider the great importance of cultivating good taste, a delicate perception of aesthetical propriety, as to literary style, elocution, appearance, and demeanor, and so as to the matter we have been discussing.” Guard against sensational preaching, he warns, but he says, “If ... you are sensitively afraid of being sensational, or of being so regarded, yet when something swells within you, give it utterance. Be not fastidious or over sensitive.” Finally, he tells the expositor to critique every message. “Be sure to reflect afterwards upon every impulsive saying, and learn from your mistakes.”⁵⁰

⁴⁸ He adds, “In general, a preacher inclined to humorous turns of thought or phrase should beware of excess.” Then, he adds, “mhdēvn algan” (not too much, pejorative), Ibid.

⁴⁹ He includes as example the common adage, “More around the corner.” Ibid.

⁵⁰ Emphasis original, Ibid.

Conclusion

The distinctive elements of Broadus' homiletic found in these Yale lectures adds a level of personality and style largely absent in many popular evaluations of his traditional methodology. An evaluation of the distinctive elements within the first canon of Broadus' framework for homiletics, coupled with the content of the lectures surveyed above, reveals a significant supplement to Broadus' late homiletic. For Broadus, preaching must remain fresh and vivid throughout a preacher's ministry. The herald must never allow habit or monotony to end the discipline of bold proclamation.

While Broadus carefully warns the preacher of the dangers of sensational preaching, his argument for the preacher to maintain freshness and disciplined invention provides convincing appeal for the power and usefulness of the prepared expositor. The substance of these two Yale lectures provide a renewed perspective on Broadus and his style in the pulpit. Indeed, the lecture content casts new light on Broadus' late development and articulation of his homiletic, correcting contemporary misconceptions of his traditional methodology. Contrary to popular consensus, this content proves Broadus' homiletic was not dry and despondent, but vivid and engaging. As a result, these lectures supplement the current consensus of Broadus homiletic, reviving it for another generation of expositors.

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