

Open Air Preaching: Remarks Thereon
Charles Spurgeon

I FEAR that in some of our less enlightened country churches there are conservative individuals who almost believe that to preach anywhere except in the chapel would be a shocking innovation, a sure token of heretical tendencies, and a mark of zeal without knowledge.. Any young brother who studies his comfort among them must not suggest anything so irregular as a sermon outside the walls of their Zion. In the olden times we are told” Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets, she crieth in the chief places of concourse, in the openings of the gates”; but the wise men of orthodoxy would have wisdom gagged except beneath the roof of a licensed building. These people believe in a New Testament which says, “Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in,” and yet they dislike a literal obedience to the command. Do they imagine that a special blessing results from sitting upon a particular deal board with a piece of straight-up panelling at their back — an invention of discomfort which ought long ago to have made people prefer to worship outside on the green grass? Do they suppose that grace rebounds from sounding-boards, or can be beaten out of pulpit cushions in the same fashion as the dust? Are they enamored of the bad air, and the stifling stuffiness which in some of our meeting-houses make them almost as loathsome to the nose and to tire lungs as the mass-houses of Papists with their cheap and nasty incense? ‘To reply to these objectors is a task for which we have no heart: we prefer foremen worthy of the steel we use upon them, but these are scarcely worth a passing remark.. One smiles at their prejudice, but we may yet have to weep over it, if it be allowed to stand in the way of usefulness.

No sort of defense is needed for preaching out of doors; but it would need very potent arguments to prove that a man had done his duty who has never preached beyond the walls of his meeting house. A defense is required rather for services within buildings than for worship outside of them. Apologies are certainly wanted for architects who pile up brick and stone into the skies when there is so much need for preaching rooms among poor sinners down below. Defence is greatly needed for forests of stone pillars, which prevent the preacher’s being seen and his voice from being heard; for high-pitched Gothic roofs in which all sound is lost, and men are killed by being compelled to shout till they burst their bloodvessels; and also for the willful creation of echoes by exposing hard, sound-refracting surfaces to satisfy the demands of art, to the total overlooking of the comfort of both audience and speaker. Surely; also some, decent excuse is badly wanted for those childish people who must needs waste money in placing hobgoblins and monsters on the outside of their preaching houses, and must have other ridiculous pieces of Popery stuck up both inside and outside, to deface rather than to adorn their churches and chapels: but no defense whatever is wanted for using the heavenly. Father s vast audience chamber, which is in every way so well fitted for the proclamation of a gospel so free, so full, so expansive, so sublime. The usual holding of religious assemblies under cover may be excused in England, because our climate is so execrably bad; but it were well to cease from such use when the weather is fine and fixed, and space and quiet can be obtained. We are not like the people of Palestine, who can foresee their weather, and

are not every hour in danger of a shower; but if we meet *sub Jove*, as the Latin's say, we must expect the Jove of the hour to be *Jupiter pluvius*. We can always have a deluge if we do not wish for it, but if we fix a service out of doors for next Sunday morning, we have no guarantee that we shall not all be drenched to the skin. It is true that some notable sermons have been preached in the rain, but as a general rule the ardor of our auditors is hardly so great as to endure much damping. Besides, the cold of our winters is too intense for services out of doors all the year round, though in Scotland I have heard of sermons amid the sleet, and John Nelson writes of speaking to "acrowd too large to get into the house, though it was dark and snowed." Such things may be done now and then, but exceptions only prove the rule. It is fair also to admit that when people will come within walls, if the house be so commodious that a man could not readily make more persons hear, and if it be always full, there can be no need to go out of doors to preach to fewer than there would be indoors; *for*, all things considered, a comfortable seat screened from the weather, and shut in from noise and intrusion, is helpful to a man's hearing the gospel with solemnity and quiet thought. A well ventilated, well managed building is an advantage if the crowds can be accommodated and can be induced to come; but these conditions are very rarely met, and therefore my voice is for the fields.

The great benefit of open-air preaching is that we get so many new comers to hear the gospel who otherwise would never hear it.

The gospel command is, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," but it is so little obeyed that one would imagine that it ran thus, "Go into your own place of worship and preach the gospel to the few creatures who will come inside." "Go ye into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in," — albeit it constitutes part of a parable, is worthy to be taken very literally, and in so doing its meaning will be best carried out. We ought actually to go into the streets and lanes and highways, for there are lurkers in the hedges, tramps on the highway, street-walkers, and lane-haunters, whom we shall never reach unless we pursue them into their own domains. Sportsmen must not stop at home and wait for the birds to come and be shot at, neither must fishermen throw their nets inside their boats and hope to take many fish, Traders *go to* the markets, they follow their customers and go out after business if it will not come to them; and so must we. Some of our brethren are prosing on and on, to empty pews and musty hassocks, while they might be conferring lasting benefit upon hundreds by quitting the old walls for awhile, and seeking living stones for Jesus. Let them come out of Reho-both and find room at the street corner, let them leave Salem and seek the peace of neglected souls, let them dream no longer at Bethel, but make an open space to be none other than the house of God, let them come down from Mount Zion, and up from Aenon, and even away from Trinity, and St. Agnes, and St. Michael-and-All. Angels, and St. Margaret-Pattens, and St. Ve-dast, and St. Ethelburga, and all the rest of them, and try to find new saints among the sinners who are perishing for lack of knowledge.

I have known street preaching in London remarkably blest to persons whose character and condition would quite preclude their having been found in a place of worship. I know, for instance, a Jewish friend who, on coming from Poland, understood nothing whatever of the English language. In going about the streets on the Sunday he noticed

the numerous groups listening to earnest speakers. He had never seen such a thing in his own country, where the Russian police would be alarmed if groups were seen in conversation, and he was therefore all the more interested. As he acquired a little English he became more and more constant in his attendance upon street speakers, indeed, it was very much with the view of learning the language that he listened at the first. I am afraid that the English which he acquired 'was not of the very best, which judgment I form as much from what I have heard of open air oratory as from having listened to our Jewish friend himself, whose theology is better than his English. However, that "Israelite indeed" has always reason to commend the street preachers. How many other strangers and foreigners may, by the same instrumentality, have become fellow-Citizens with the saints and of the household of God we cannot tell. Romanists also are met with in this manner more frequently! than some would suppose, It is seldom prudent to publish cases of conversion among Papists, but my own observation leads me to believe that they are far more common than they; were ten years ago, and the gracious work is frequently commenced by what is heard of the gospel at our street corners. Infidels, also, are constantly yielding to the word of the Lord thus brought home to them.

The street evangelist, moreover, wins attention from those eccentric people whose religion can neither be described nor imagined. Such people hate the very sight of our churches and meeting houses, but will stand in a crowd to hear what is said, and are often most impressed when they affect the greatest contempt.

Besides, there are numbers of persons in great cities who have not fit clothes to worship in, according to the current idea of what clothes ought to be; and not a few whose persons as well as their garments are so filthy, so odorous, so unapproachable, that the greatest philanthropist and the most leveling democrat might desire to have a little space between himself and their lively individualities.. There are others who, whatever raiment they wear, would not go into a chapel upon any consideration, for they consider it to be a sort of punishment to attend divine service. Possibly they remember the dull Sundays of their childhood and the dreary' sermons they have heard when 'for a few times they have entered a church, but it is certain that they look upon persons who attend places of worship as getting off the punishment they ought to endure in the next world by suffering it in this world instead. The Sunday newspaper, the pipe, and the pot, have more charms for them than all the preachments of bishops and parsons, whether of church or dissent. The open-air evangelist frequently picks up these members of the "No church" party, and in so doing he often finds some of the richest gems that will at last adorn the Redeemer's crown: jewels, which, by reason of their roughness, are apt to be unnoticed by a more fastidious class of soul-winners. Jonah in the streets of Nineveh was heard by multitudes who would never have known of his existence if he had hired a hall; John the Baptist by the Jordan awakened an interest which would never have been aroused had he kept to the synagogue; and those who went from city to city proclaiming everywhere the word of the Lord Jesus would never have turned the world upside down if they had felt it needful to confine themselves to iron rooms adorned with the orthodox announcement, "The gospel of the grace of God will (D.V.) be preached here next Lord's day evening."

I am quite sure, too, that, if we could persuade our friends in the country to come out a good many times in the year and hold a service in a meadow, or in a shady grove, or on the hill side, or in a garden, or on a common, *it would be all the better for the usual hearers*.. The mere novelty of the place would freshen their interest, and wake them up. The slight change of scene would have a wonderful effect upon the more somnolent. See how mechanically they move into their usual place of worship, and how mechanically they go out again. They' fall into their seats as if at last they had found a resting place; they rise to sing with an amazing effort, and they drop down before you have time for a doxology' at the close of the hymn because they did not notice it was coming, What logs some regular hearers are! Many of them are asleep with their eyes open. After sitting a certain number of years in the same old spot, where the pews, pulpit, galleries, and all things else are always the same, except that they get a little dirtier and dingier every week, where everybody occupies the same position for ever and for evermore, and the minister's. face, voice, tone are much the same from January to December,. — you get to feel the holy quiet of the scene and listen to what is going on as though it were addressed to "*the dull cold ear of death.*" As a miller hears his wheels as though he did not hear them, or a stoker scarcely notices the clatter of his engine after enduring it for a little time; or as a dweller in London never notices the ceaseless grind of the traffic; so do many members of our congregations become insensible to the most earnest addresses, and accept them as a matter of course. The preaching and the rest of it. get to be so usual that they might as well not be at all. Hence a change of place might be useful, it might prevent monotony, shake up indifference, suggest thought, and in a thousand ways promote attention, and give new hope of doing good. A great fire which should burn some of our chapels to the ground might not be the greatest calamity which has ever occurred, if it only aroused some of those rivals of the seven sleepers of Ephesus who will never be moved so long as the old house and the old pews hold together. Besides, the fresh air and plenty of it is a grand thing for every mortal man, woman, and child. I preached in

Scotland twice on a Sabbath day at Blairmore, on a little height by the side of the sea, and after discoursing with all my might to large congregations, to be counted by thousands, I did not feel one-half so much exhausted as I often am when addressing a few hundreds in some horrible black hole of Calcutta, called a chapel. I trace my freshness and freedom from lassitude at Blairmore to the fact that the windows could not be shut down by persons afraid of heights, and that the roof was as high as the heavens are above the earth. My conviction is that a man could preach three or four times on a Sabbath out of doors with less fatigue than would be occasioned by one discourse delivered in an impure atmosphere, heated and poisoned by human breath, and carefully preserved from every refreshing infusion of natural air.

Tents are had — unutterably bad: far worse than. the worst buildings. I think a tent is the most objectionable covering for a preaching place that was ever invented. I am glad to see tents used in London, for the very worst place is better than none, and because they can easily be moved from place to place, and are not very expensive; but still, if I had my choice between having nothing at all and having a tent, I should prefer the open air by far. Under canvas the voice is deadened and the labor of speaking greatly increased. The material acts as a wet blanket to the voice, kills its resonance, and prevents its traveling.

With fearful exertion, in the sweltering air generated in a tent, you will be more likely to be killed than

to be heard. You must have noticed even at our own College gatherings, when we number only some two hundred, how difficult it is to hear at the end of a tent, even when the sides are open, and the air is pure. Perhaps you may on that occasion attribute this fact in some degree to a want of attentiveness and quietness on the part of that somewhat jubilant congregation, but still even when prayer is offered, and all is hushed, I have observed a great want of traveling power in the best voice beneath a marquee.

If you are going to preach in the open air in the country, you will perhaps have *your choice of a spot wherein to preach*; if not, of course you must have what you can get, and you must in faith accept it as *the very best*. Hobson's choice of that or none makes the matter simple, and saves a deal of debate. Do not be very squeamish. If there should happen to be an available meadow hard by your chapel, select it because it will be very convenient to turn into the meeting-house should the weather prove unsuitable, or if you wish to hold a prayer-meeting or an after-meeting at the close of your address. It is well to preach before your regular services on a spot near your place of worship, so as to march the crowd right into the building before they know what they are about. Half-an-hour's out-of door speaking and singing before your ordinary hour of assembly will often fill an empty house. -At the same time, do not always adhere to near and handy spots, but choose a locality for the very opposite reason, because it is fat' away from any place of worship and altogether neglected. Hang up the lamps wherever there is a dark corner; the darker the more need of light. Paradise Row and Pleasant Place are generally the least paradisaical and the most unpleasant: thither let your steps be turned. Let the dwellers in the valley of the shadow of death perceive that light has sprung up for them.



I have somewhere met with the recommendation always to preach with a wall behind you, but against that I respectfully enter my cavcar. Have a care of what may be on the other side of the wall! One evangelist received a can of scalding water from over a wall with

the kindly remark, 'There's soup for Protestants!' and another was favored with most unsavory

bespatterings from a vessel emptied from above, Gideon Ouseley began to preach in Roscoramon with his back against the gable of a tobacco factory in which there was a window with a wooden door, through which goods were hoisted into the loft. Would you be surprised to learn that the window suddenly opened, and that from it descended a pailful of tobacco water, an acrid fluid most painful to the eyes? The preacher in after years knew better than to put himself in such a tempting position. Let his experience instruct you.

If I had my choice of a pitch for preaching, I should prefer to front a rising ground, or an open spot bounded at some little distance by a wall. Of course there must be sufficient space to allow of the congregation assembling between the pulpit and the bounding Object in front, but I like to see an end, and not to shout into boundless space. I do not know a prettier site for a sermon than that which I occupied in my friend Mr. Duncan's grounds at Bennote. It was a level sweep of lawn, backed by rising terraces covered with fir-trees. The people could either occupy the seats below, or drop down upon the grassy banks, as best comported with their comfort, and thus I had part of my congregation in rising galleries above me, and the rest in the area around me. My voice readily ascended, and I conceive that if the people had been seated up the hill for half-a-mile they would have been able to hear me with ease. I should suppose that Wesley's favorite spot at Gwennap Pit must be somewhat after the same order. Amphitheaters and hillsides are always favorite spots with preachers in the fields, and their advantages will be at once evident to you.

My friend Mr. Abraham once produced for me a grand cathedral in Oxfordshire. The remains of it are still called "Spurgeon's Tabernacle," and may be seen near Minster Lovell, in the form of a quadrilateral of oaks. Originally it was the *beau ideal* of a preaching place, for it was a cleared spot in the thick forest of Witchwood, and was reached by roads cut through the dense underwood. I shall never forget those "alleys *green*," and the verdant walls which shut them in. When you reached the inner temple it consisted of a large square, out of which the underwood and smaller trees had been cut away, while a sufficient number of young oaks had been left to rise to a considerable height, and then overshadow us with their branches. Here was a truly magnificent cathedral, with pillars and arches: a temple not made with hands; of Which we might truly say,

***"Father, thy hand
Hath reared these venerable columns, thou
Didst weave this verdant roof."***

I have never, either at home or on the Continent, seen architecture which could rival my cathedral. "Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the wood." The blue sky was visible through our clarestory, and from the great window at the further end the sun smiled upon us toward evening. Oh, sirs, it was; grand indeed, to worship thus

beneath the vaulted firmament, beyond the sound of city hum, where all around ministered to quiet fellowship with God. That spot is now cleared, and the place of our assembly has been selected at a little distance from it. It is of much the same character, only that my boundary walls of forest growth have disappeared to give place to an open expanse of ploughed fields. Only the pillars and the roof of my temple remain, but I am still glad, like the Druids, to worship among the oak trees. This year a clove had built her nest just above my head, and she continued flying to and fro to feed her young, while the sermon proceeded. Why not? Where should she be more at home than where the Lord of love and Prince of Peace was adored? It is true my arched cathedral is not waterproof, and other showers besides those of grace will descend upon the congregation, but this has its advantages, for it makes us the more grateful. When the day is propitious, and the very precariousness of the weather excites a large amount of earnest prayer.

I once preached a sermon in the open air in haying time during a violent storm of rain. The text was, "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth," and surely we had the blessing as well as the inconvenience. I was sufficiently wet, and my congregation must have been drenched, but they stood it out, and I never heard that anybody was the worse in health, though, I thank God, I have heard of souls brought to Jesus under that discourse. Once in a while, and under strong excitement, such things do no one any harm, but we are not to expect miracles, nor wantonly venture upon a course of procedure which might kill the sickly and lay the foundations of disease in the strong.

I remember well preaching between Cheddar' Cliffs. What a noble position! What beauty and sublimity! But there was great danger from falling pieces of stone, moved by the people who sat upon the higher portions of the cliff, and hence I would not choose the spot again. We must studiously avoid positions where serious accident might [be possible]. An injured head qualifies no one for enjoying the beauties of nature, or the consolations of grace. Concluding a discourse in that place, I called upon those mighty rocks to bear witness that I had preached the gospel to the people, and to be a testimony against them at the last great day, if they rejected the message. Only the other day I heard of a person to whom that appeal was made useful by the Holy Spirit.

Look well to the ground you select, that it is not swampy. I never like to see a man slip up to his knees in mire while I am preaching. Rushy places are often so smooth and green that we select them without noting that they are apt to be muddy, and to give our hearers wet feet. Always inconvenience yourself rather than your audience: your Master would have done so. Even in the streets of London a concern for the convenience of your hearers is one of the things which conciliates a crowd more than anything.

Avoid as your worst enemy the neighborhood of the Normandy poplar. These trees cause a perpetual hissing and rustling sound, almost like the noise of the sea. Every leaf of certain kinds of poplar is in perpetual motion, like the tongue of Talkative. The noise may not seem very loud, but it will drown the best of voices. "The sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees" is all very well, but keep clear of the noise of poplars and some

other trees, or you will suffer for it. I have had painful experience of this misery. The old serpent himself seemed to hiss at me out of those unquiet boughs.

Practiced preachers do not care to have the sun directly in their faces if they can help it, neither do they wish their hearers to be distressed in like manner, and therefore they take this item into consideration when arranging for a service. In London we do not see that luminary often enough to be much concerned upon this point.

Do not try to preach against the wind, for it is an idle attempt. You may hurl your voice a short distance by an amazing effort, but you cannot be well heard even by the few. I do not often advise you to consider which way the wind blows, but on this occasion I urge you to do it, or you will labor in vain. Preach so that the wind carries your voice towards the people, and does not blow it down your throat, or you will have to eat your own words. There is no telling how far a man may be heard *with the wind*. In certain atmospheres and climates, as for instance in that of Palestine, persons might be heard for several miles; and single sentences of well-known speech may in England be recognized a long way off, but I should gravely doubt a man if he asserted that he understood a new sentence beyond the distance of a mile. Whitfield is reported to have been heard a mile, and I have been myself assured that I was heard for that distance, but I am somewhat skeptical. Half-a-mile is surely enough, even with the wind, but you must make sure of that to be heard at all. In the country it ought to be easy to find a fit place for preaching. One of the earliest things that a minister should do when he leaves College and settles in a country town or village is to begin open air speaking. He will generally have no difficulty as to the position; the land is before him and he may choose according to his own sweet will. The market-cross will be a good beginning, then the head of a court crowded with the poor, and next the favorite corner of the idlers of the parish. Cheap-Jack's stand will make a capital pulpit on Sunday night during the village fair, and a wagon will serve well on the green, or in a field at a little distance, during! the weekday evenings of the rustic festival. A capital place for an *al fresco* discourse is the green where the old elm trees, felled long ago, are still lying in reserve as if they were meant to be seats for your congregation; so also is the burial ground of the meeting-house where "*the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.*" Consecrate it to the living and let the people enjoy "*Meditations among the Tombs.*" Maim no excuses, then, but get to work at once.

In London, or any other large town, it is a great thing to find a vacant spot where you can obtain a right to hold services at your pleasure. If you can discover a piece of ground which is not yet built over, and if you can obtain the use of it from the owner till he covers it, it will be a great acquisition, and worth a slight expense in fencing; for you are then king of the castle and disturbers will be trespassers. I suppose that such a spot is not often obtainable, especially by persons who have no money; but it is worth thinking about. It is a great gain when your place of worship has even a small outside space, like that at Surrey Chapel, or upon the Tabernacle steps; for here you are beyond the interference of the police or drunken men. If we have none of these, we must find street corners, triangles, quiet nooks, and wide spaces wherein to proclaim the gospel. Years ago I preached to enormous assemblies in King Edward's Road, Hackney, which was

then open fields, but now not a spare yard remains. On those occasions the rush was perilous to life and limb, and there seemed no limit to the throngs. Half the number would have been safer. That open space has vanished, and it is the same with fields at Brixton, 'where in years gone by it was delightful to see the assembled crowds listening to the word. Burdened with the rare trouble of drawing too many together, I have been compelled to abstain from these exercises in London, but not from any lessened sense of their importance. With the Tabernacle always full I have as large a congregation as I desire at home, and therefore do not preach outside except in the country; but for those ministers whose *area* under cover is but small, and whose congregations are thin, the open air is the remedy whether in London or in the provinces.

In raising a new interest, and in mission operations, out of door services are a main agency. Get the people to *listen* outside that they may by-and-by *worship* inside. You want no pulpit, a chair will do, or the kerb of the road. The less formality the better, and if you begin by merely talking to the two or three around you and make no pretense of sermonizing you will do well. More good may be done by personal talk to one than by a rhetorical address to fifty. Do not purposely interfere with the thoroughfare, but if the crowd should accumulate do not hasten away in sheer fright: the policeman will let you know soon enough. You are most wanted, however, where you will be in no danger of impeding passers-by, but far more likely to be in danger yourself — I refer to those central courts and blind alleys in our great cities which lie out of the route of decency, and are known to nobody but the police, and to them principally through bruises and wounds. Talk of discovering the interior of Africa, we need explorers for Frying-pan Alley and Emerald-Island Court: the Arctic regions are well nigh as accessible as Dobiusion's Rents and Jack Ketch's Warren. Heroes of the cross — here is a field for you more glorious than the Cid ever beheld/when with his brave right arm he smote the Paynim hosts. Who will bring me into the strong city. Who will lead me into Edom?" Who will enable us to win these slums and dens for Jesus?! Who can do it but the Lord? Soldiers of Christ who venture into these regions must expect a revival of the practices of the good old times, so far as brickbats are concerned, and I have known a flower-pot fall accidentally from an upper window in a remarkably slanting direction. Still, if we are born to bedrowned we shall not be — killed by flower-pots. Under such treatment it may be refreshing to read what Christopher Hopper wrote under similar conditions more than a hundred years ago. "I did not much regard a little dirt, a few rotten eggs, the sound of a cow's horn, the noise of bells, or a few snowballs in their season; but sometimes I was saluted with blows, stones, brickbats, and bludgeons. These I did not well like: they were not pleasing to flesh and blood. I sometimes lost a little skin, and once a little blood, which was drawn from my forehead with a sharp stone. I wore a patch for a few days, and was not ashamed; I gloried in the cross. And when my small sufferings abounded for the sake of Christ, my comfort abounded much more. I never was more happy in my own soul, or blessed in my labors."

I am somewhat pleased when I occasionally hear of a brother's being locked up by the police, for it does him good, and it does the people good also. It is a fine sight to see the minister of the gospel marched off by the servant of the law! It excites sympathy for him, and the next step is sympathy for his message. Many who felt no interest in him before

are eager to hear him when he is ordered to leave off, and still more so when he is taken to the station. The vilest of mankind respect a man who gets into trouble in order to do them good, and if they see unfair opposition excited they grow quite zealous in the man's defense.

I am persuaded that the more of open air preaching there is in London the better. If it should become a nuisance to some it will be a blessing to others, if properly conducted. If it be the gospel which is spoken, and if the spirit of the preacher be one of love and truth, the results cannot be doubted: the bread cast upon the waters must be found again after many days. The gospel must, however, be preached in a manner worth the hearing, for mere noise-making is an evil rather than a benefit. I know a family almost driven out of their senses by the hideous shouting of monotonous exhortations, and the howling of "*Safe in the arms of Jesus*" neat' their door every Sabbath afternoon by the year together. They are zealous Christians, and would willingly help their tormentors if they saw the slightest probability of usefulness from the violent bawling: but as they seldom see a hearer, and do not think that what is spoken would do any good if it were heard, they complain that they are compelled to lose their few hours of quiet because two good men think it their duty to perform a noisy but perfectly useless service. I once saw a man preaching with no hearer but a dog, which sat upon its tail and looked up very reverently while its master orated. There were no people at the windows nor passing by, but the brother and his dog were at their post whether the people would hear or whether they would forbear. Once also I passed an earnest declaimer, whose hat was on the ground before him, filled with papers, and there was not even a dog for an audience, nor any one within hearing, yet did he "waste his sweetness on the desert *air*." I hope it relieved My own mind. Really it must be viewed as an essential part of a sermon that somebody should hear it: it cannot be a great benefit to the world to have sermons preached *in vacuo*.

As to *style in preaching out of doors*, it should certainly be very different from much of that which prevails within, and perhaps if a speaker were to acquire a style fully adapted to a street audience, he would be wise to bring it indoors with him. A great deal of sermonizing may be defined as saying nothing at extreme length; but, out of doors verbosity is not admired, you must say something and have done with it anti go on to say something more, or your hearers Will let you know. "Now then," cries a street critic, "let us have it, old fellow." Or else the observation is made, "Now then, pitch it out I you'd better go home and learn your lesson." "Cut it short, old boy," is a very common admonition, and I wish the presenters of this advice gratis could let it be heard inside Ebenezer and Zoar and some other places sacred to long-winded Orations. Where these outspoken criticisms are not employed, the hearers rebuke prosiness by quietly walking away. Very unpleasant this, to find your congregation dispersing, but a very' plain intimation that your ideas are also much dispersed. In the street, a man must keep himself alive, and use many illustrations and anecdotes, and sprinkle a quaint remark here and there. To dwell long on a point will never do. Reasoning must be brief, clear, and soon done with. The discourse must not be labored or involved, neither must the second head depend upon the first, for the audience is a changing one, and each point must be complete in itself. The chain of thought must be taken to pieces, and each link melted down and turned into bullets: you will need not so much Saladin's saber to cut through a

muslin handkerchief as Coeur de Lion's battle-ax to break a bar of iron. Come to the point at once, and come there with all your might.

Short sentences of words and short passages of thought are needed for out of doors. Long paragraphs and long arguments had better 'be reserved for other occasions. In quiet country crowds there is much force in an eloquent silence, now and then interjected; it gives people time to breathe, and also to reflect. Do not, however, attempt this in a London street; you must go ahead, or someone else may run off with your congregation. In a regular field sermon pauses are very effective, and are useful in several ways, both to speaker and listeners, but to a passing company who are not inclined for anything like worship, quick, short, sharp address is most adapted.

In the streets a man must from beginning to end be intense, and for that very reason he must be condensed and concentrated in his thought and utterance. It would never do to begin by saying, "My text, dear friends, is a passage from the inspired word, containing doctrines of the utmost importance, and bringing before us in the clearest manner the most valuable practical instruction. I invite your careful attention and the exercise of your most candid judgment while we consider it under various aspects and place it in different lights, in order that we may be able to perceive its position in the analogy of the faith. In its exegesis we shall find an arena for the cultured intellect, and the refined sensibilities. As the purling brook meanders among the meads and fertilizes the pastures, so a stream of sacred truth flows through the remarkable words which now lie before us. It will be well for us to divert the crystal current to the reservoir of our meditation, that we may quaff the cup of wisdom with the lips of satisfaction." There, gentleman, is not that rather above the average of word-spinning; and is not the art very generally in vogue in these days? If you go out to the obelisk in Blackfriars Road, and talk in that fashion, you will be saluted with "Go on, old buffer," or "Ain't *he fine*? MY EYE!" A very vulgar youth will cry, "What a mouth for a rarer!" and another will shout in a tone of mock solemnity, "AMEN!" If you give them chaff they will cheerfully return it into your own bosom. Good measure, pressed down and running over will they mete out to you. Shams and shows will have no mercy from a street gathering. But have something to say, look them in the face, say what you mean, put it plainly, boldly, earnestly, courteously, and they will hear you. Never speak against time or for the sake of hearing your own voice, or you will obtain some information about your personal appearance or manner of oratory which will probably be more true than pleasing. "Crikey," says one, "wouldn't he do for an undertaker! He'd make 'era weep" This was a compliment paid to a melancholy brother whose tone is peculiarly funereal. "There, old fellow," said a critic on another occasion, "you go and wet your whistle. You must feel awfully dry after jawing away at that rate about nothing at all." This also was specially appropriate to a very heavy brother of whom we had aforetime remarked that he would make a good martyr, for there was no doubt of his burning well, he was so dry. It is sad, very sad, that such rude remarks should be made, but there is a wicked vein in some of us, which makes us take note that the vulgar observations are often very true, and "hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature." As caricature often gives you a more vivid idea of a man than a photograph would afford you, so do these rough mob critics hit off an orator to the life by their exaggerated censures. The very best speaker must be prepared to take his share of street wit, and to

return it if need be; but primness, demureness, formality, sanctimonious long-windedness, and the affection of superiority, actually invite offensive pleasantries,! and to a considerable extent deserve them. Chadband or Stiggins in rusty black, with plastered hair and huge choker, is as natural an object of derision as Mr. Guido Fawkes himself. A very great man in his own esteem will provoke immediate opposition, and the affectation of supernatural saintliness will have the same effect. The less you are like a parson the more likely you are to be heard; and, if you are known to be a minister, the more you show yourself to be a man the better. “*What do you get for that, governor?*” is sure to be asked, if you appear to be a cleric, and it will be well to tell them at once that this is extra, that you are doing overtime, and that there is to be no collection. “*You’d do more good if you gave us some bread or a drop of beer, instead of them tracts,*” is constantly remarked, but a manly manner, and the outspoken declaration that you seek no wages but their good, will silence that stale objection.



The *action* of the street preacher should be of the very best. It should be purely natural and unconstrained, into speaker should stand up in the street in a grotesque manner, or he will weaken himself and invite attack. The street preacher should not imitate his own minister, or the crowd will spy out the imitation very speedily, if the brother is anywhere neat' home. Neither should he strike an attitude as little boys do who say, “*My name is Nerve!*” The stiff straight posture with the regular up and down motion of arm and hand is too commonly adopted: and I would even more condemn the wild-raving-maniac action which some are so fond Of, which seems to be a cross between ‘Whitefield with both his arms in the air, and Saint George with both his feet violently engaged in trampling on the dragon. Some good men are grotesque by nature, and others take great pains to make themselves so. The wicked Londoners say, “*What a Cure I*” I only wish knew of a cure for the evil.

All mannerisms should be avoided. Just now I observe that nothing can be done without a very large Bagster's Bible with a limp cover. There seems to be some special charm about the large size, though it almost needs a little perambulator in which to push it about With such a Bible full of ribbons, select a standing in Seven Dials, after the pattern of a divine so graphically described by Mr. McCree. Take off your hat, put your Bible in it, and place it on the ground. Let the kind friend who approaches you on the right hold your

umbrella. See how eager the dear man is to do so! Is it not pleasing? He assures you he is never so happy as when he is helping good men to do good. Now close your eyes in prayer. When your devotions are over, *somebody will have profited by the occasion*. Where is your affectionate friend who held your umbrella and your hymn-book? Where is that well-brushed hat, and that orthodox Bagster? Where? oh, here? Echo answers, "Where?"

The catastrophe which I have thus described suggests that a brother had better accompany you in your earlier ministries, that one may watch while the other prays. If a number of friends will go with you and make a ring around you it will be a great acquisition, and if these can sing it will be still further helpful. The friendly' company will attract others, will help to secure order, and will do good service by sounding forth sermons in song.

It will be very desirable to speak so as to be heard, but there is no use in incessant bawling. The best street preaching is not that which is lone at the top of your voice, for it must be impossible to lay the proper emphasis upon telling passages when all along you are shouting with all your might. When there are no hearers near you, and yet people stand upon the other side of the road and listen, would it not be as well to cross over and so save a little of the strength which is now wasted? A quiet, penetrating, conversational style would seem to be the most telling. Men do. not bawl and holler when they are pleading in deepest earnestness; they have generally at such times less wind and a little more rain: less rant and a few more tears. On, on, on with one monotonous shout and you will weary everybody and wear out yourself. Be wise now, therefore, O ye who would succeed in declaring your Master's message among the multitude, and use your voices as common sense worth! dictate.

In a tract published by that excellent society "The Open Air Mission," I notice the following

Qualifications For Open-Air Preachers.

1. A good voice.
2. Naturalness of manner.
3. Self-possession.
4. A good knowledge of Scripture and of common things.
5. Ability. to adapt himself to any congregation.
6. Good]illustrative powers.
7. Zeal, prudence, and common sense.

8. A large, loving heart.
9. Sincere belief in all he says.
10. Entire dependence on the Holy Spirit for success.
11. A close walk with God by prayer.
12. A consistent walk before men by a holy life.

If any man has all these qualifications, the Queen had better make a bishop of him at once, yet there is no one of these qualities which could well be dispensed with.

Interruptions are pretty sure to occur in the streets of London. At certain places all will go well for months, but in other positions the fight begins as soon as the speaker opens his mouth. There are *seasons* of opposition: different schools of adversaries rise and fall, and accordingly there is disorder or quiet. The best tact will not always avail to prevent disturbance; when men are drunk there is no reasoning with them, and of furious Irish Papists we may say much the same. Little is to be done with such unless the crowd around will cooperate, as oftentimes they will, in removing the obstructor. Certain characters, if they and that preaching is going on, will interrupt by hook or by crook. They go on purpose, and if answered once and again they still persevere. One constant rule is to be always courteous and good tempered, for if you become cross or angry it is all over with you. Another rule is to keep to your subject, and never be drawn into side issues. Preach Christ or nothing: don't dispute or discuss except with your eye on the cross. If driven off for a moment always be on the watch to get back to your sole topic. Tell them the old, old story, and if they will not hear *that*, move on. Yet be adroit, and take them with guile. Seek the one object by many roads. A little mother-wit is often the best resource and will work wonders with a crowd. Bonhommie is the next best thing to grace on such occasions. A brother of my acquaintance silenced a violent Romanist by offering him his stand and requesting him to preach. The man's comrades for the very fun of the thing urged him on, but, as he declined, the dog in the manger fable was narrated and the disturber disappeared. If it be a real skeptic who is assailing you it is prudence to shun debate as much as possible, or ask him questions in return, for your business is not to argue but to proclaim the gospel. Mr. John McGregor says "*Skeptics* are of many kinds. Some of them ask questions to get answers, and others put difficulties to puzzle the people. An honest skeptic said to me in a crowd in Hyde-park, ' I have been trying to believe for these ten years, but there is a contradiction *I cannot get over*, and it is this: we are told that printing was invented not, five hundred years ago, and yet that the Bible is five thousand years old, and I cannot for the life of me see how this can be.' Nay! the crowd did not laugh at this man. *Very few people in a crowd know much more than he did about the Bible.* But how deeply they drank in a half-hour's account of the Scripture. manuscripts, their preservation, their translations and versions, their dispersion and collection, their collation and transmission, and the overwhelming evidence of their genuine truth I.

I remember an infidel ,on Kennington Common being most effectually stopped. He continued to cry up the beauties of *nature* and the works of *nature* until the preacher asked him if he would kindly tell them what nature was. He replied that “everybody knew what nature was.” The preacher retorted, “Well, then, it will be all the easier for you to tell us.” “Why, nature — nature’ he said, “nature,-nature is nature.” Of course, the crowd laughed and the wise man subsided.

Ignorance when it is allied with a coarse voluble tongue is to be met by letting it have rope enough. One fellow wanted to know how Jacob *knew* that Esau hated him He had hold of the wrong end of the stick that time, and the preacher did not enlighten him, or he would have set him up with ammunition for future encounters.

Our business is not to supply men with arguments by informing them of difficulties. In the process of answering them ministers have published the sentiments of infidels more widely than the infidels themselves Could have done. Unbelievers only “glean their blunted shafts, and shoot them at the shield of truth again.’ Our object is not to conquer them in logical encounters, but to save their souls. Real difficulties we should endeavor to meet, and hence a competent knowledge of the evidences is most desirable; but honest objectors are best conversed with alone, when they are not ashamed to own themselves in the wrong, and this we could not expect of them in the crowd. Christ is to be preached whether men will believe in him or no. Our own experience of His power to save will be our best reasoning, and earnestness our best rhetoric. The occasion will frequently suggest the fittest thing to say, and we may also fall back on the Holy Spirit who will teach us in the selfsame hour what we shall speak.

The open-air speaker’s calling is as honorable as it is arduous, as useful as it is laborious. God alone can sustain you in it, but with Him at your side you will have nothing to fear. If ten thousand rebels were before you and a legion of devils in every one of them you aced not tremble. More is he that is for you than all they that! be against you.

***“By all helps host withstood,
We all hews host o’erthrow;
And conquering them, through Jesus’ blood.
We still to conquer go.”***