

SCP 24460

Alumni Assoc



DISCOURSES

AT THE

INAUGURATION

OF THE

REV. JAMES W. ALEXANDER, D.D.

AS PROFESSOR OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY AND CHURCH  
GOVERNMENT IN THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
AT PRINCETON.

DELIVERED AT PRINCETON, NOVEMBER 20. 1849.

BEFORE THE DIRECTORS OF THE SEMINARY.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

NEW-YORK:  
ROBERT CARTER & BROTHERS, 285 BROADWAY.  
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I.

THE SERMON;

BY THE REVEREND WILLIAM S. PLUMER, D. D., OF BALTIMORE.

II.

THE CHARGE;

BY THE REV. WILLIAM W. PHILLIPS, D. D., OF NEW-YORK.

III.

THE INAUGURAL DISCOURSE.

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1850.

JOHN F. TROW, PRINTER,  
49 and 51 Ann-street.

The Efficiency of the Church.

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A SERMON

DELIVERED AT THE INAUGURATION OF

JAMES W. ALEXANDER, D. D.,

AS PROFESSOR OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY AND CHURCH  
GOVERNMENT IN THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
AT PRINCETON,

NOVEMBER 20, 1849.

BY THE

REV. WM. S. PLUMER, D. D.,  
PASTOR OF THE FRANKLIN-ST. PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN BALTIMORE.

# S E R M O N .

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## I N T R O D U C T O R Y R E M A R K S .

SOME may regard the present as a fit occasion for sketching, or reviewing the history of the institution, whose interests have called us together. Such forget that several persons, whose names are inseparably connected with its rise and growth, are still living, and that many important events, deeply affecting its character, are so recent and so well known, that an account of them would hardly awaken interest, or might wound the modesty of those who love to do good in secret. He who shall preach the sermon before the Board in the year 1912, when a century shall have rolled by, or even in the year 1862, when half a century shall have passed away after its founding, will probably find these difficulties very much removed. Such a discourse at the right time will be full of interest. The materials are constantly accumulating in the records of the institution, in the labours of its professors, and in the character of its

alumni. "The heraldry of colleges is their sons." Already some burning and shining lights have gone forth from this school, and been consumed by the intensity of their own heat. The number of such is constantly increasing. Besides, very marvellous have been God's dealings with this seminary. Every year is marked with new displays of kindness to it. It has been emphatically the child of Providence. Let us record God's goodness, that generations, which come after us, may praise the Lord.

The particular professorship, whose incumbent is this day to be inducted into office, would suggest a discourse respecting the department of instruction, which he is to fill. But without predicting the exercises of this evening, it may be presumed that the inaugural address will sufficiently treat of church history, the right use of it, and the best methods of studying it.

Moreover, every professorship in our seminary has vast *general* bearings on the state of the church at large. It sends forth a thousand influences through the pulpit and the press. By precept, by example, by hints and suggestions, no less than by set instructions, it shapes the destinies and moulds the characters of thousands. Any subject, therefore, relating to the church, the ministry, the spread of the Gospel, or the means of doing good to the souls of men, cannot be altogether inappropriate to the business, which has called us together. The text is found in

Acts xii. 21.

BUT THE WORD OF GOD GREW AND MULTIPLIED.

The subject plainly brought to view in these words is the Efficiency of the Church of Christ. The text relates to a period ten or eleven years after the ascension of our Saviour. It is but one of many passages in the same book, recording in few words the wonderful progress of truth. Elsewhere we read: "The same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls;" "And the Lord added daily to the church such as should be saved." Acts ii. 41, 47. "Many of them, which heard the word, believed, and the number of the men was about five thousand." Acts iv. 4. These are a few specimens of the inspired record concerning the Christian Church, the first few years of its existence. The chief instruments of this success were the apostles, the seventy, and their converts. Under the guidance and blessing of God these men laboured so efficiently that twenty-eight years after Christ's ascension the Jewish converts were spoken of as "many myriads." Acts xxi. 20. Our translators render the word, "thousands;" but the original is not as in Acts ii. 41, and iv. 4, *χιλιάδες*, but *μυριάδες*, myriads, which word, used definitely, means ten thousands, but is often taken for a great and countless throng. In Hebrews xii. 22, it is rendered "innumerable," "an innumerable company of angels." It often has this sense.

The same year Paul, writing to the Romans, applies to the preachers of the Gospel the words which the Psalmist used in regard to the works of creation, every where declaring God's glory: "Their sound went out into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." Rom. x. 18.

So famous was one of the early churches even then, that Paul says: "Your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world." Rom. i. 8. Almost every historical chapter, relating to events subsequent to Christ's ascension, contains proofs of the triumphs of truth, of which the like can seldom be found in modern times. For centuries the growth of the church was amazing. About the end of the second or the beginning of the third century, Tertullian thus addresses the cruel persecutors of the Christians: "We could also make a terrible war upon you without arms or fighting at all, by being so passively revengeful, as only to leave you; for if so numerous a host of Christians should but retire from the empire into some remote region of the world, the loss of so many men of all ranks and conditions would leave a hideous gap and a shameful scar upon the government; and the very evacuation would be abundant revenge. You would stand aghast at your desolation, and be struck dumb at the general silence and horror of nature, as if the whole world had departed. You would be at a loss for men to govern."\* In the beginning of the

\* "Tertull. Apol. contra Gent." cap. 37.



seventh century, there were in many places thirty Christians to one pagan, so mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

It would be unwise to compare our own with other branches of the church equally or more feeble, lukewarm, and inefficient. We are foolishly prone to make comparisons, which shall flatter our vanity and excuse our want of zeal. Pride, sloth, and carnal security, the worst vices of a church, will thus be nourished. If we compare ourselves with others, let us take the best models furnished us. The best of mere men have never been so holy, so humble, so useful, as the word of God demanded. Let us then look at our own and the primitive church in respect to efficiency. The facts concerning the latter have been briefly alluded to. They are generally known. The last ten years of our history perhaps afford as favourable a specimen of our efficiency as any other equal period.

In the year ending May 1839, the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, embraced 17 synods, 96 presbyteries, 192 licentiates, 1243 ministers, 1823 churches, and 128,043 communicants. The same year it contributed to various specified religious purposes 123,436 dollars, less than one dollar for each communicant.

In the year ending May 1849, we had 23 synods, 122 presbyteries, 252 licentiates, 1860 ministers, 2512 churches, and 200,830 communicants. During the same time we gave, for the same objects as stated

above, 217,327 dollars, a little more than one dollar for each member. The miscellaneous collections for both years are omitted. The average annual increase for ten years has been 61 ministers, 68 churches, and 7271 communicants. Take from the sum of money given all that was actually derived from non-communicants, and it is certain that the average contributions of communicants have been below one dollar. During each or any one of the ten years, the additions to our churches, on examination, have not averaged five to each ordained minister, leaving out licentiates altogether. Many years it has been considerably less.

From this brief review, it clearly appears that we are not utterly forsaken. There are amongst us some tokens for good. God has not pronounced the curse of utter barrenness upon us. Every good man must feel that in proportion to the zeal of the church, the reward has been great, and calls for songs of praise.

But the things which remain, need to be greatly strengthened. Our church is far below the primitive church in efficiency. Allowing each apostle and each of the seventy to have been the means of converting five souls annually, at the end of one year their converts would have been only four hundred and ten; whereas in one day there "were added about three thousand souls." That, indeed, was a wonderful day, even for those times; but when were three thousand souls added in one day under all our ministers? There is

need of a great change amongst us. Our church is far from being what she ought to be; far from doing what she ought to do. No wise man will be offended by such a statement. You should never forget:

1. That God alone can make a church efficient. This honour he claims in all the Scriptures. If the disciples multiplied, it was because "the Lord added daily" to their number. He "gave the increase." A church is never efficient by her "own power or holiness," but by the grace and Spirit of God, who "divideth to every man severally as he will." God is a sovereign. His counsel shall stand. Nothing is too hard for him. Any thing is too hard for us, until we be "endued with power from on high." Our weapons are indeed mighty to the pulling down of strongholds, but then they are mighty "through God" alone.

2. Nor is it true that the church or the ministry is responsible for success. Such doctrine can never be proved by Scripture. It condemns several of the prophets and Christ himself. Those who maintain it, are so far fanatical; and, if really good men, must often fall under invincible discouragement.

3. Yet it is our duty to desire success, to seek it earnestly, never to rest satisfied without it, and deeply to lament the want of it. He who cares not whether men are saved or lost, is hard-hearted and cruel. He, upon whom horror hath not taken hold because of the wicked, is not like the saints of the Bible. Nor can

it be denied that ordinarily, in his own time, God grants success in some way and measure to pious, judicious and hearty efforts, so that want of success is good ground of heart-searching and humiliation. The Lord is a God of mercy. He loves Zion and the souls of men. We do surely concur with his known plans when we make known the Gospel to all nations for the obedience of faith.

The efficiency of a church may be considered as affected by the private members, by church officers, and by benevolent institutions. This view presents a wide range, but as hints only will be offered, the general subject will not be lost sight of.

I. What then is essential to the efficiency of the great body of private members ?

All will agree that any extended and permanent usefulness in the church has its seat in the piety of her members. When a people have long had the Gospel, and cannot present a body of truly pious persons as the fruit, the necessary inference is that they have never truly believed and obeyed God's word. If souls are not saved from sin, neither are they from wrath ; and if they are not saved from sin and wrath, they have received "the grace of God in vain." All the humanizing, civilizing, refining effects of the Gospel, however pleasant to behold, and desirable for this life, are no more its end, than chaff is the great end sought in sowing precious grain. Decency without devotion, gentility without godliness, forms without

spiritual life, are miserable things. To make a church efficient, piety is important, as a demonstration of the efficacy of the Gospel, as constituting a mass of evidence which infidelity cannot argue away, as a basis of appeal to the consciences of unbelievers, as one of the most practical modes of giving instruction, and as the very life of a church. It is the main spring of nearly every good enterprise, humane, social, intellectual or religious. A church may have all else, but without this she is dead. A body without a spirit is not more powerless, than a church without love to God and love to man. Every work, promising much good, demands faith in a Providence unseen, in promises not yet fulfilled, in a covenant whose administrator is invisible. It demands self-denial in something which flesh and blood worships. It requires hope against many appearances to the contrary. It requires a wisdom far above the most cunning craftiness; a firmness which delays cannot shake; a humility which measures not its own abasement; a zeal which, like the fire on the altar of old, burns day and night; a fear of God which casts out the fear of man; and a love that never counts the cost. Yet these things are but other names for piety. Not a virtue in the catalogue but it strengthens all other virtues and gives power to the saints. Luther could never have faced the world as he did, but for his deep penitence before God. The martyrdom of Stephen chiefly differed from that of some heathen men in this, that he fervently prayed for

his murderers. The Christian comes forth from devout meditation and humble confession like a giant refreshed with wine. Even trials and temptations, causing terrific conflicts, give strength and courage. Luther truly said: "A Christian well tempted is worth a thousand." Piety then is essential to the efficiency of a church. Other things being equal, the more pious a community, the greater and more benign will be its power. It cannot be believed that a church, abounding with eminently pious members, would not be more mighty for good than ours has ever been.

As a consequence of eminent piety, the members of a church will and should abound in prayer, in all prayer, secret, social and public. The mercies of the day of Pentecost, the wonders of love at Shotts in Scotland, at Enfield in Connecticut, and at many other times and places, as we learn from credible sources, were all preceded by much and earnest prayer. Perhaps in nothing are we as a church more deficient, than in supplications with tears and strong cryings to God. After all our times of special observance, how little prayer, like that of patriarchs, prophets and apostles, is made unto God! Yet it is only such prayer that is likely to avail much. Such prayer was never more necessary or more efficacious than in our day.

A readiness to every good work is also necessary in the private members of a church. Some dream of doing good, but never do it. "Hypocrisy delights in

the most sublime speculations; for never intending to go beyond speculation, it costs nothing to have it magnificent." How does a dread of failure press down many, as if every exertion of duty was not attended with some hazard. What means this strange reluctance to encounter opposition and obloquy? Who ever did much for his generation unless he was willing to be esteemed by fools a candidate for contempt? As surely as Nehemiah will rebuild Jerusalem, so surely will Tobiah say: "Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall break down their stone wall." Too often the church takes counsel of her foes and her fears, rather than of her King and her God. Sloth in Christ's cause consumes many. How few lay out all their energies in promoting the glory of God! Is not covetousness eating the very vitals of piety in ten thousand cases? The voice of divine warning cries: "Ye cannot serve God and mammon:" "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." "They that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." Yet how few are made the wiser thereby! If good men every where firmly believed that "it is more blessed to give than to receive," and could catch the spirit of those good men, who took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, what a new face things would every where put on! Then "the Lord God would cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all nations;" then "a

little one should become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation :” then “ the Lord would comfort Zion, He would comfort all her waste places, and make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord ; joy and gladness should be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody.”

II. What sort of officers are necessary to the efficiency of a church ? There are three classes of officers, deacons, elders and ministers. Concerning the first and second of these, time forbids much to be said. But they should be eminently devoted and humble men, mighty in the Scriptures, wise as serpents, lovers of good men, full of zeal, hating covetousness, pursuing peace, cultivating a high public spirit, always magnifying their office, ready to every good work, men of blameless lives, of great self-control, and fond of their proper work.

Concerning ministers, the occasion demands more extended remarks. They must, then, be truly and eminently pious. Unless *truly* pious, their every sermon will be a verdict against their own souls, every duty of their office a dull ceremony, and every prayer a prelude to the wailings of despair. An unconverted ministry is one of the sorest plagues ever sent on men. It can at best lead its followers, where it goes itself, to the prison of eternal justice. Surely “ boxes that contain sweet perfumes ought themselves to be sweet.” And unless ministers be *eminently* pious, how can they go before the people, and beckon them on to new and



high achievements? Will not ministerial duties be tasks, and ministerial fruit and comfort be small, where piety is languid, and faith weak? We must also have a learned ministry, and for many reasons: *first*, the very words of the Holy Ghost are in dead languages; *secondly*, they who are set for the defence of the Gospel will meet with subtle and learned adversaries, who will delight to overwhelm truth with reproach, unless their folly be made manifest; and *thirdly*, it takes no small amount of learning to make plain to most minds the great things of God. An ignorant ministry may do as much harm as an ungodly ministry. "Lay hands suddenly on no man." But lay hands *never* on

"Skulls that cannot teach, and will not learn."

"Give thyself to reading." "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear unto all," is still the rule for a minister's studies. "The priest's lips shall keep knowledge." He who feeds not the people with knowledge has the instruments of a "foolish shepherd." Truth in its purity, in its simplicity, in its harmonies, is the staple of pulpit instruction. Nor can fluency, eloquence, zeal, piety, age, or activity, ever be admitted as substitutes for solid learning. If an ignorant ministry can save our country, it is already sufficiently numerous without our swelling its list. To relax the rigour of our rules

on this subject would be fatal to our prospects as a Church. One of the questions formerly asked of the elder concerning his pastor before the Scottish presbyteries was: "Does he minde his booke?" "The head of my College," says Knox, "procured me a curacy in a small country town. Thither I went, not without my collection of books, the use of which I would not have foregone for a mitre." Paul, when an old man, and a prisoner, sent across the sea more than five hundred miles for his books and parchments. Of one who had the leprosy in his head, the law said: "The priest shall pronounce him utterly unclean; the plague is in his head." Lev. xiii. 44. An unconverted minister, who preaches truth, has often been compared to a sign-post, which directs others, but stirs not itself. But if he be ignorant also, he is like an unlettered post, which neither goes itself, nor tells others the road. "If it be said, God has no need of our learning, it is sufficient to reply, neither has he of our ignorance."\* If any say it is God's plan to save men by the foolishness of preaching, the answer is, that he has never said he will save men by foolish preaching.

An efficient ministry must also be active and energetic. God seems to have no patience with men of a contrary character. Hear him: "His watchmen are all blind; they are ignorant; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to

\* South.

slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs, which can never have enough." Isa. lvi. 10, 11. This language of divine derision could hardly be more terrible. "Better is it to be awaked with rudeness, or even by a false alarm, than to be allowed to sleep on in the midst of danger. Who would muzzle the mouth of the wakeful animal, that guards the house against thieves, because the inhabitants are frequently disturbed by his nocturnal vociferations, or substitute in his place a 'dumb dog that cannot bark, sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber?'"\*

Cotton Mather tells us, that on occasion of a great meeting in Amyclæ, a cry of fire was heard, and the assembly broken up in confusion. The apprehensions thus excited were found to be groundless, and the wise men determined that hereafter any one giving a false alarm should be subjected to pains and penalties. Thereafter when men saw an unusual smoke or blaze they did not dare to express their fears, lest it should be only the burning of a chimney. At last the fire gained such power, that when the cry was heard, it could not be extinguished: and so it came to pass, that the town of Amyclæ was destroyed by silence. Many a soul has been ruined by silence. We need wakeful and stirring men every where. That was a good saying of Augustine: "Episcopatus non est artificium transigendæ vitæ."

\* McCrie's Life of Knox, p. 297.

The passage just quoted from Isaiah puts dumb dogs and greedy dogs together, and so we often see sloth and covetousness united. To be greedy of filthy lucre is a scriptural disqualification for the sacred office. It has long been said by the wits of England that every thing suffers by translation except a bishop. Is there no cause for saying the same in this land? It is not true that there are no temptations to this sin in the American churches. But a covetous ministry was never efficient.

An humble ministry is greatly needed. Those who lord it over God's heritage have no right in the house of God. He who minds high things, who condescends not to men of low estate, who will not profit by a just reproof, and who is too wise to learn, may please himself, but cannot please Christ. Blessed is he, who can say with a great professor of theology of another age and country, "Though pride prevails much in my heart, yet I think I would trample it so far under my feet, as that I would be glad to see all my students, and not only them, but all the faithful ministers of Jesus, bringing hundreds or thousands of souls with them into heaven, though I should have but five or six."\* It is even more strikingly true of ministers than of others, that "when pride cometh, then cometh shame," and that "pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." Prov. xi. 2,

\* John Brown, of Haddington.

and xvi. 18. "Scrutator majestatis absorbetur a gloria," was among the best of patristical maxims. Had it always been heeded, how many heresies and schisms would have been avoided !

We also need a ministry free from that love of admiration, which is a universal sin. "Let us not be desirous of vainglory." Gal. v. 26. "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory ; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." Phil. ii. 3.

Nor is freedom from ambition less necessary. How insidious and troublesome this sin is, may be judged from the fact that it bred contentions in the family of Christ, while he was yet on earth. Almost every page of history, even of ecclesiastical history, tells how dangerous it is.

An efficient ministry must reject the arts of luxury and effeminacy, and "endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ." "He that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things ;" a lover of good eating and drinking, a clerical fop, or dandy, are without honour in the ministry. Paul admits that Timothy had often infirmities, yet he says, "Till I come give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." 1 Tim. iv. 13. Every Moses has his Jethro, who says, "Thou wilt wear thyself away." And what if one should spend and be spent in the work, will there not be rest enough in the grave and in heaven ?

An efficient ministry must have a large measure of

magnanimity and public spirit; must sympathize with the most generous sentiments of the age; must not stand higgling about trifles; and must exhibit that nobility, which Divine grace and enlarged culture can surely give. A prodigious mind with no heart makes a monster or a devil.

The preaching, which is likely to prove efficient, must take for its matter the word of God. Woe to him who keeps back any part of the counsel of God through fear of unpopularity. The man of God must unfold doctrines, and enforce duties; he must present promises, and denounce threatenings; he must hold forth encouragements without concealing responsibilities; he must preach the law and the Gospel *distinctly*, and not a mixture of both; yet he must not forget that mercy triumphs over judgment, and that where sin abounds, grace does much more abound. As a physician of the soul, he must know and declare the extent of the malady, no less than the perfection of the remedy. As men are poor, let him open and display the riches of Divine grace; as they are perishing, let him tell of One, who came to seek and to save that which was lost. He who will do his whole duty in these respects, will find neither time nor heart to preach heathen morals, the poetry of religion, a vain philosophy, or any other dream. The stern command is, "Preach the preaching that I bid thee." "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faith-

fully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord."

All good preaching is solemn, not gloomy, nor filled with whining cant, but free from levity and vanity. He who speaks of God, eternity, sin, salvation, death, judgment, heaven and hell, in a frivolous manner, is a contemptible trifler. With a buffoon for a preacher, no place is as the house of God, or the gate of heaven. The Bible is not a jest-book, heaven is not a fiction, hell is not a dream, damnation is not a chimera; it is a solemn thing to die, it is also a solemn thing to live, and especially to preach or hear the Gospel. He who "woos a smile" when he should "win a soul" is a charlatan, not an ambassador for God.

The word of God must be preached plainly, not in allusions and doubtful terms, not in innuendos and learned phrases, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but in words which the Holy Ghost teacheth, not with the refinements of the schools, but so that the women and children may understand. Richard Baxter said, that if ministers had sinned in Latin, he would have written his Reformed Pastor in Latin; but as they had sinned in plain English, he must write in plain English also. Orton says: "I believe many ministers over-polish their sermons." He adds: "The words of God are those that must reach the heart and do the work." Brown of Haddington says: "So far as I have observed God's dealings with my soul, the

flights of preachers have entertained me ; but it was Scripture expressions that did penetrate my soul, and that in a manner peculiar to themselves." Thomas Watson says of the Baptist : " John did not preach so much to please as to profit. He chose rather to show men's sins than his own eloquence. That is the best looking-glass, not which is most gilded, but which shows the truest face."

The Gospel must be preached boldly. " When vice is bold, it is sad that virtue should be sneaking." A tame or timid proclamation of God's laws or mercies, is miserable drivelling. Whenever the Jews were filled with envy, and contradicted and blasphemed, " Paul and Barnabas waxed bold." Paul says : " Wherein any is bold, I am bold also." How much afraid he was of coming short in this respect, may be judged from the fact that he besought the Ephesians to pray that utterance might be given unto him, that he might open his mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the Gospel, and that he might speak boldly, as he ought to speak." Eph. vi. 19, 20.

Yet the word of God must be spoken affectionately. A harsh, dogmatical, censorious or objurgatory herald of truth is little like him who said : " Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly." A sinner saved by grace, should live under the power of the law of kindness. Almost as well not speak the truth at all, as not speak it in love. One says that it was fit that Bartimeus should tell all the blind of the power and



kindness of Jesus, but it would have been very unseemly for him to have taken a club and beaten all who would not come to him. "Love and say what you please," is an old maxim in preaching.

Boldness and love are elements of earnestness. The Gospel is to be preached with great earnestness, as if men really believed it. The truth is, heaven is open just before us, hell is yawning just beneath us, the avenger of blood is just behind us, the axe is laid at the root of the tree, God invites us, mercy opens all her storehouses, the Judge standeth before the door, the battle between the powers of light and of darkness rages, heaven, earth and hell are moved on the subject of man's eternal destiny; and shall we, can we faintly tell of the great dangers of men, or of the great salvation of God? What a shame that upon history, politics, patriotism, or a Greek verb, men should be earnest, and yet upon redemption there should be a lifeless languor!

The Gospel must be preached diligently and laboriously, in season and out of season, publicly and from house to house, by day and by night. In his short public life, Whitefield preached more than eighteen thousand times. His influence will be felt on earth until the millennium. Alas for most of us, "life is half spent before we know what it is!"

We must preach faithfully. Ministers are not sent to prophesy smooth things. The human heart and Satan will lull men's souls into security. Our

work is not to justify men but God, not to take sides with rebels, but with their sovereign. No discretion is left us in this matter. We may never yield to the wicked prejudices, errors and clamors of men. We cannot maintain God's cause by stealth. To stand faithful among the faithless, to make open and fearless war on wickedness, to vindicate the right and the true at all hazards, is the covenanted work of every messenger of God.

All preaching must be enforced by example. Though a man may do some, yet he is not likely to do much good by words, which sanctify not his own heart. "Like priest, like people," is still the common rule the world over. With good reason, therefore, did Paul say to Timothy: "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." 1 Tim. iv. 12.

III. A few observations respecting benevolent institutions shall close this discussion. These are of two kinds, such as invite the co-operation of all the friends of the Redeemer, and such as embrace the proper business of a denomination. The church that stands aloof from organizations which spread light and happiness among men, justly falls under suspicion. None but a hard heart can fail to find delight in any truly benevolent work. What a shame and curse would it be to us as a church, to grow cold to the Bible Society, and many other noble institutions in our land! The organizations which belong to us as a

denomination, are none the less benevolent because they are under ecclesiastical control. Of both classes of such institutions it may be said, that their origin, in most cases, is to be traced to some pressing necessity, that their beginnings were small, that their founders seldom anticipated even their present enlargement, that their labours are eminently the works of faith, and that to have refused to form them would have been faithlessness. "When bad men combine, the good must associate." "Union is strength." In nothing have we a more beautiful illustration of the great principle of political economy, the utility of a division of labour, than in the united efforts of good men to subdue the world to knowledge and to Christ. In the management of all these institutions, it is of great importance that they be kept out of the hands of cliques, that they be conducted on the broad bases on which they were founded, that their officers be men of accurate knowledge and enlarged views, that none of them settle down upon their lees, that a rousing vigour constantly animate them, and that rash changes be not permitted to impair public confidence in them. To all of them we may apply the sayings of a great statesman in regard to politics: "It is a poor service that you gain from responsibility." "It is of the utmost moment not to make mistakes in strong measures." "Sufficient appearances will never be wanting to those who have a mind to deceive themselves." "A modification is the constant resource of

weak undeciding minds:" "A spirit of innovation is generally the result of a selfish temper and confined views:" "Refined policy has ever been the parent of confusion; and ever will be so long as the world endures." When an American inquired of a Secretary of the London Missionary Society concerning its policy, he received this noble reply: "We have no policy. Our simple business is to send the Gospel to the heathen." Could our Church obtain any more than her just influence over institutions belonging to every denomination of God's people, it would be a calamity to them, and a shame to us. And could any section of the Church control institutions which belong to the whole denomination, the loss would be tremendous. Of all men we have least need of those who plot, and scheme, and lay traps for the confiding. Candour and fair dealing are the glory of a man, the glory of a church.

Towards all such institutions, therefore, we should be vigilant but not suspicious; we should give a cordial support to those who bear the burden of conducting their operations; we should heartily pray for them and rejoice in their success; we should be frank in giving our advice and suggestions, and not be offended if our opinions prevail not; and we should aid them with funds according to our ability and their necessities. Should our Church this year give five hundred thousand dollars to the Bible Society, who doubts that it would be the signal for the gushing forth of

streams of plenty to our own institutions? But niggardliness is the great sin of this day. Who does not grieve at the crippled state of every scheme of usefulness which the Church has approved? Is it not a shame to the denomination that our oldest seminary should have a library of but about seven thousand volumes, and many of them small and of little value? Ten thousand dollars' worth of books should be put there this year, and provision should be made for a yearly accession.

I close by remarking :

1. That our Church would be far more efficient, if she put a just estimate upon the blessing of being made the instrument of great good to men. We have orthodoxy, learning, peace, order, wealth, and the noblest theatre of action on this globe. But where is our efficiency? The wicked are wasting millions of money, are wearing out giant intellects, are sacrificing innumerable lives, and destroying many precious souls for that which is naught; but are we not satisfied with doing almost nothing for him who bought us with his blood? John Newton well says: "He is the best fisherman, not who has the best fishing-tackle, but who catches the most fish." Rules are good, but results are better. In a season of bodily illness, when his mind was full of missions, Andrew Fuller received a letter from a Scottish Baptist, saying much of order. In his sick room he sketched this parable: "In one of the new Italian republics, two independent companies

are formed for the defence of the country. Call the one A and the other B. In forming themselves, and learning their exercise, they profess to follow the mode of discipline used by the ancient Romans. Their officers, uniforms, and evolutions are after all somewhat different from each other. Hence disputes arise, and B refuses to march against the enemy with A, as being disorderly. A gives his reasons why he thinks himself orderly; but they are far from satisfying B, who not only treats him as deviating from rule, but as almost knowing himself to do so, and wilfully persisting in it. A, tired of jarring, marches against the enemy by himself. B sits at home busily studying order and discipline. 'If your form and rules,' says A, 'are so preferable to ours, why do you not make use of them? Discipline is a means, not an end. Be not always boasting of your order, and reproaching others for the want of it; let us see the use of it.'" The interpretation of the parable is easy. It is time to march against the enemy. It is high time to be on the battle-field. Every man should be at his post clad in the panoply of God. It was a terrible rebuke of a presbyter to his diocesan: "Bishop, bishop, charity is above rubrics." It is better to be like Jonathan and his armour-bearer in the garrison of the Philistines, than, like Saul, to be asleep within the trench, his spear stuck in the ground by his bolster, and three thousand men sleeping around him. Let us be up and doing. Let us earnestly court

the best gifts, the hardest labours, and the most perilous undertakings, provided only we have the approval of God. He, who is satisfied with little usefulness, will have less. He, who would be a blessing to thousands, will probably reach ten thousands.

2. In the business of this day, it is a happy circumstance that we are not met to consummate an arrangement, which the Church does not approve. In several respects the present might be a time of congratulation. But the awfully solemn responsibilities of a professor, the trying nature of his duties, the perils of the times in which we live, the loud call for hosts of able men, and the low state of piety in most places, may well silence congratulations, and bring us to our knees. The services of this day have an intimate connection with the honour of religion, the glory of Christ, and the decisions of the last day. It was no small part of the work of Christ on earth to prepare twelve men to preach the Gospel. What meekness, what fidelity, what zeal, what perseverance he displayed! No man can avoid eternal shame in so difficult a work, but by taking hold of God's strength, and ceasing from man. If any one has a right to ask God's people never to forget him in their prayers, it is a professor in such an institution. "A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven." But divine mercy has made, and divine faithfulness will fulfil the promise, "My grace is sufficient for thee." This is enough.

If one, who is less than the least of all God's mercies, might say a few words to his brother, who is this day to be inaugurated, they would be such as these: God has given you a high place, see that you adorn it. Remember that life is short, and improve each day. Never forget that your example, your words, your spirit, will mould the characters of others. Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Be not easily discouraged. Hope on, hope ever. Remember that Christ and his people have intrusted to you the most precious jewels. Never forget that your students have sorrows demanding your tenderest sympathies. Be an elder brother among them. Though they are young and have many crude opinions, yet Milton and Homer once learned their alphabet, and the apostles were once illiterate and ignorant men. One has well said: "Of many students, not more than one can be hoped to advance far towards perfection."\* This is as true of theological as of other students; yet if one very able man can be raised up for each synod in our connection, what a blessing will follow! And now cannot all of us mingle benediction and supplication over this brother, and say: "THE LORD BLESS THEE AND KEEP THEE: THE LORD MAKE HIS FACE TO SHINE UPON THEE, AND BE GRACIOUS UNTO THEE: THE LORD LIFT UP HIS COUNTENANCE UPON THEE AND GIVE THEE PEACE: THE LORD HEAR THEE

\* Dr. Johnson.



IN THE DAY OF TROUBLE: THE NAME OF THE GOD OF JACOB DEFEND THEE, SEND THEE HELP FROM THE SANCTUARY, AND STRENGTHEN THEE OUT OF ZION; REMEMBER ALL THY OFFERINGS, FULFIL ALL THY COUNSEL, AND GRANT ALL THY PETITIONS."



The Authority, Duties, and Value of the Christian Ministry.

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A CHARGE

TO THE PROFESSOR.

BY THE

REV. WM. W. PHILLIPS, D. D.,

PASTOR OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE CITY OF NEW-YORK.



## C H A R G E .

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THE history of the past teaches us that the ministry of reconciliation has hitherto exerted—and the Bible warrants the assertion—that it is destined hereafter to exert a more important influence than any other agency. It must most deeply affect all the best interests of men, and is immediately connected with the highest glory of God. By it his moral perfections, and his counsels concerning the vocation, sanctification and glorification of his people are to be made known. For He has been pleased to ordain that the exercise of this office should be the means of saving them that believe; of preserving and edifying the Church until her complete and final triumph shall have been achieved, and all the ransomed of the Lord shall have been gathered into his fold. He has therefore adapted it to perform its great, powerful, and glorious work.

I. In the first place, those who exercise it are clothed with DIVINE AUTHORITY. They are to be a distinct order of men, set apart for the work. The names and titles by which they are distinguished are all significant of the nature and design of their office, and cannot be applied to believers indiscriminately. Their qualifications are mentioned, their peculiar duties are enumerated, and the manner of their induction into office is pointed out in the word of God. All are not permitted to assume the office of the ministry whenever they may feel themselves to be self-moved thereto, or whenever they may choose to take the honour of it to themselves; but those only who are called to it of God, and are regularly appointed. When our Lord ascended up on high he gave gifts to men; some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. Eph. iv. 11-13. It is true, the apostles were extraordinary officers, ordained immediately by our Lord Jesus Christ, to perform a special work which needed not to be repeated; and it was essential that those who acted as apostles should have seen the Lord, so that they could not as such have any successors; yet as there never has been and never can be a church-state

without a ministry, and as the same necessity which required the appointment at first still exists and will continue to exist until the end of time, the office of an ordinary ministry must be perpetual. We accordingly find in the Scriptures that the apostles ordained presbyters and elders in every church, and commanded them to ordain others; enjoining it upon the churches to obey them in their official capacity.

The promise of the Saviour, annexed to the words of its institution, implies that it was to be continued in the Church and to be clothed with the same authority: "Go ye into all the world and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Those whom the Saviour then addressed did not continue in the body until the end of the world; they served the Church during their generation, and went to their reward; but their office must continue, and those who exercise it lawfully have the same authority and an interest in the same promise. As it was said of the Saviour, "that he taught not as the Scribes, but as one having authority;" so may it be said in a subordinate sense of those who come in his name. He has commissioned them, saying, "As my Father hath sent me, so send I you; he that receiveth you receiveth me." He has authorized them to say, "Now

then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us ; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

II. The NATURE OF THEIR MESSAGE and of their work is in itself, as well as by divine appointment, adapted to produce the most important results. They make known, ministerially, the one only living and true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. They communicate that knowledge which lies at the foundation of all true religion, the knowledge of the only legitimate object of worship and of his mind and will. Him, whom all nature adores, whom all his works praise, whom the human mind, blinded by sin, seeks after and ignorantly worships, they declare ; even Jehovah the great first Cause, the Creator of the heavens and of the earth, the self-existent, eternal and unchangeable God. They make known his holy law, the only true and ultimate standard of righteousness, the infallible test of virtue and of character, of truth and of morals ; by which all sentiments, opinions, doctrines and conduct are to be tried, and which is to be regarded as higher than the fitness of things, being before and lying back of all things, and as above the consciences of men, being the law of the human conscience.

They are sent to declare the sentence of this law respecting the children of men, from which they may learn their guilt and condemnation, and the relation they sustain to their Lawgiver as transgressors:



“Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.” This solemn and startling declaration being the truth, and coming armed with divine authority, finds a response in every sinner’s conscience. It is often delivered in the presence of some who do not hear it, whose minds are elsewhere ; but those who do attend to it and who are capable of understanding it, cannot hear it with indifference ; they must feel themselves condemned by it, and hence they will either make light of it and attempt to evade the application of it, or will rise in the enmity of their carnal minds against it with resentment and indignation, or convinced of its truth, they will acknowledge it. Even those who affect the greatest indifference respecting it, are at times troubled and made superstitious by it ; there are moments when they dare scarcely to be alone ; when the thoughts of death, and of what may be after death, intrude ; and when they are shocked by the reflection that this declaration may be true. We know how easy it is for God, through the instrumentality of his law, to disquiet the conscience ; to fill it with terrors and an overwhelming sense of sin.

But God does not leave them here ; his ministers are sent with a message of peace and reconciliation : they are sent to preach the gospel, to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation to the chief of sinners. It is this especially which gives them great advantage over all other teachers, and such an unparalleled influence

for good. They are permitted to teach the doctrine of forgiveness, and to make known the way in which it has been obtained, which gives assurance to all that it is efficacious. They are enabled to answer the momentous questions,—Wherewithal shall we come before the Lord? How shall man be just with God? What must we do to be saved? questions which have most painfully perplexed the minds of all who have been left without a revelation from heaven; nor have they ever been answered except in the gospel of Jesus Christ. If God is just, true and unchangeable, and if man is a sinner, and death the wages of sin, then how can the sinner escape his righteous doom?

The sentence of condemnation against him must be executed, or God must deny himself. There must be an atonement made for his sin, such as shall satisfy divine justice and be acceptable to God, or the sinner cannot escape. This truth has been felt and acknowledged by the whole human race; as appears in the various rites and ceremonies which have been religiously observed, in the voluntary humility, privations, self-denial, fasts, and bodily torture to which many have submitted with a view of making such atonement, and in the self-righteous spirit which characterizes all of us, in the tenacity with which we cling to some fancied goodness in ourselves, as a commendation to God and a ground of our acceptance. But we can never commend ourselves to God by any works we can perform, nor make an atonement for our

sins by any offerings of silver or gold, or of the blood of animals.

It is the blood of Christ shed in the sacrifice by the appointment of God, and that alone, which can cleanse from sin ; and the knowledge of this is essential to human happiness. The redemption that is in Christ is the only remedy for fallen man : only this meets the exigency of the case of the sinner, and can effectually restore him. The great work of the ministry is to make known, and to offer, this redemption. Is it not to be expected, therefore, that men who have this treasure intrusted to them, who have the chief good to impart instrumentally, who can teach the way of life, are prepared with promises of grace, of mercy and of strength, adapted to every case, and can administer consolation under all circumstances, should exert great influence ? They can speak with confidence and boldness, having certain knowledge of the truths they declare. They come, not to utter conjectures, to publish their own opinions ; nor yet do they come to amuse or to astonish, by setting forth the fruits of their own investigations in different departments of science. But they come in the name of the Lord of Hosts, to declare his statutes, and to make known his judgments, to publish matters of faith and duty, with authority to require men to believe and obey Him who sent them. They come to warn every man, and to teach every man, apprising them of the certain issue of a message, armed with the solemn sanctions of law.

Those who believe, through their preaching, are said to have received their message, "not as the word of man, but as it is in truth, the word of God;" and their faith stands "not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." Their declarations and denunciations are very different from the essays and orations delivered by men, as the offspring of their own minds, and the effect is different. The latter are regarded as matters of opinion, which may be embraced or rejected with impunity, and can never produce a deep, radical, and permanent change of character. They cannot control the ruling passions, govern the conscience, nor affect the hearts of men. Mere philosophy, falsely so called, human wisdom, the highest efforts of genius, the most moving persuasions to virtue, without the authority and blessing of God, never effected a spiritual reformation, in any, nor converted a single soul. "Where is the wise, where is the scribe, where is the disputer of this world?" What have they ever accomplished towards the salvation of men? "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" Has it not been shown before the universe, that man without a revelation cannot find out God; cannot discover the chief good, or the way to attain it? The messengers of God come to their fellow men as their best friends, to treat with them respecting their most precious interests, both for time and eternity. They come to do good, and not evil, to save men, and not to destroy them. They come to sympathize with them in their sorrows and secret

griefs, being men of like passions with them, and having been under the same condemnation: wherefore

III. THE RELATIONS WHICH THEY SUSTAIN, AND THE OFFICES WHICH THEY PERFORM, as teachers, as pastors, as peacemakers and comforters, cannot fail to commend them to the confidence and affections of those among whom they minister, and to give them a salutary influence.

They are the divinely appointed teachers of the world. He who commissioned them, sent them into all the world, declaring that to be their field of labour, and that their work was to instruct men in the most important and useful of all knowledge—the knowledge of God, of their duty, and of their destiny.

They are said, emphatically, to be the light of the world; having been more especially set for the defence and propagation of the gospel, as the means of promoting pure and undefiled religion. They have been set for the rise or fall of many, and must be a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death. They are God's witnesses against sin, in every form, and in favour of whatever things are true, just, pure, amiable, lovely, and of good report.

They are called to testify that God will render to every man according to his deeds. To them who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribula-

tion and anguish. They are charged to make known what will be the rule of judgment in the day of final retribution, when He shall judge the secrets of men, and at the same time to hold forth the word of life. They are the standard-bearers in that army, through the instrumentality of which the Lord Jesus Christ is going forth conquering and to conquer, turning men from darkness to light, and delivering them from the power of Satan. Yet the weapons of their warfare are not carnal, but spiritual. They are armed with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. With this, and according to its laws, principles and spirit, are they to form the character of the rising generation, to correct and regulate public sentiment, to promote the peace, order, and happiness of society, to relieve the distressed, to comfort the afflicted; to teach men how to live usefully, how to suffer patiently, and how to die triumphantly. It must be conceded by the impartial and unprejudiced, that the world has been more indebted to the sacred ministry for preserving and disseminating useful knowledge, sound literature, the true principles of liberty, of good government, and of human rights, than to any other order of men. They have ever been the friends of learning, of just laws, and of free government, and have ever manifested a willingness to make sacrifices for the public welfare.

Though they have on various occasions met with strong opposition, and have sometimes been persecuted

for bearing testimony to the truth, and for advocating the cause of God and of humanity, they have nevertheless persevered without fear, in the faithful discharge of their duty. Wherever there is an enlightened, faithful, and zealous ministry, we usually find an enlightened, liberal, active, and devoted people. There we find the Sabbath observed, benevolent institutions supported, schools encouraged, the social duties performed, the fountains of justice and of virtue uncorrupted, and the bonds of society made strong. Other means of doing good are important in their place as auxiliaries in evangelizing the world; but they are all subordinate to the ministry, and without it would be comparatively inefficient. The Bible, the Tract, the Sunday School societies, are great and noble institutions, we cannot express our sense of their importance, nor commend them too highly. But these are intimately connected with, and immediately dependent on the ministry, and could not be successfully and permanently sustained without it. We must send the living teacher with the Bible, or it will not be appreciated, read, or understood. If we would promote the more extensive and effectual dissemination of the Scriptures, we must send among the people those who have learned their value, discovered their excellence and glory, discerned the light of life revealed in them, and felt the consolation which they impart, and who may, from their own knowledge and experience, commend them to others; who may adapt and apply the word to

the hearts and consciences of men according to their different circumstances, and be able rightly to divide it, giving to each his portion in season. So if we would secure the sanctification of the Sabbath, circulate religious tracts, establish Common and Sabbath Schools, we must enlighten public sentiment, enlist men in behalf of these institutions, and through a living ministry. It is the paramount institution, by the appointment of God, and in effect includes all other benevolent institutions. It originates, and in the most effectual manner sustains, every benevolent enterprise. It opens the springs of life and furnishes the waters of salvation. It creates and directs into their proper channels all those tributary streams which are to make glad the city of our God; which are to animate, refresh, and fertilize the world. It brings into requisition those resources and agencies which, under God, are to be the means of bringing in the latter day glory.

IV. The influence which ministers of Christ are permitted to exert, is not derived so much from their divine authority, nor from the nature of their message, nor from the relations they sustain and the offices they perform, as from THE PRESENCE OF GOD WITH THEM. Without Him they can do nothing salutary or beneficial. They are entirely and constantly dependent on him. He must bestow upon them their gifts, impart to them their grace, strength, and commission. He must call them to their particular field of labour, and hold them up in it. He must keep and guide them from day to



day, and when they have watched, prayed, studied, and toiled, in planting and in watering, he must give the increase. His presence with the apostles, working in them and with them by many signs and wonders, was the secret of their success; we can assign no other adequate cause of it in their circumstances. They were without any worldly advantage or influence, without friends, wealth or patronage; up to the time of their public ministry they had lived in obscurity; when they entered upon it, they had to contend against the most bitter and inveterate hatred of Christ on the part of the Jews, against their deeply rooted prejudices, arising from their peculiar circumstances, in addition to the enmity of their carnal mind, and against the ignorance, superstition, and idolatry of the Gentiles. The doctrines which they taught were every where spoken against. They were pure, spiritual, and exclusive; condemning all the existing systems of religion—all the customs, all the worship, and all the gods of the nations. Those who embraced them must suffer persecution, take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, and lay down their lives if need be. Yet they triumphed over all opposition; gained converts wherever they went; established Churches in every city, town and village; ordained ministers and elders in them, and saw multitudes added to them daily of such as were saved.

Surely we have in their success one of the most remarkable events that has ever occurred in the his-

tory of the world; an event which can be explained only by admitting that God was with them. He accompanied their preaching with the outpouring of the Spirit, gave divine energy to the word spoken by them, and made it the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation. He is still the same; his arm is not shortened that it cannot save; with him is the residue of the Spirit; and his promise to the ministry has not yet run out, and therefore may we expect that it will still exert its appropriate influence in the world. But we must remember, that its influence can be salutary, and exerted to its full extent, only when it is what God intended it to be. There is no charm in the name, nor any virtue in the office itself, to produce these great and glorious results, without any reference to the character of the persons filling it, or the manner in which they execute it. All God's institutions are wise, efficacious and salutary; but it is when appropriately used. The Sabbath is a blessing to man when it is sanctified; the ministry is a precious gift, and most benevolent institution, when it is exercised by pious, learned, prudent, and faithful men.

1. That they may accomplish the end for which the ministry was appointed and prove a blessing to the world, those who exercise it must be spiritually enlightened and godly men, having a knowledge and personal experience of the power and transforming influence of the truth, and a love for it; they must have confidence in its efficacy to sanctify and save them

that believe, as well as an assurance of the promised presence of God with them. They who would faithfully represent Christ, and make him known to others, must themselves know him and have his Spirit. They who would teach their fellow-men, as becometh the oracles of the living God, must be rooted and grounded in the truth. Their office requires them to beseech men, and to pray them in Christ's stead to become reconciled to God; to be affectionate, tender, and gentle, long-suffering and patient, earnest and importunate in calling sinners to repentance, and to speak the truth in love; to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, submitting cheerfully to the toils and privations of their employment; to be instant in season and out of season in watching for the souls of men as those that must give account; and to give themselves wholly to the work of feeding the flock of God, comforting and encouraging and building them up in faith and holiness. But this they cannot do in sincerity, nor with a willing mind, if they have never learned the value of their own souls, nor been made sensible of their own misery and danger as sinners—if they have not received Christ Jesus the Lord as their Saviour and are not walking in him—if they have not tasted the blessedness of having their own sins forgiven, of having peace with God and his love shed abroad in their hearts. God will have true and tried men for his ministry, men of acknowledged piety and of good report.

2. They must be intelligent and apt to teach ; men of cultivated minds, possessing those intellectual as well as moral qualifications which may render them acceptable and useful public teachers. They must have knowledge, and the faculty of communicating it, having been prepared by diligent study and reading to act as workmen that need not to be ashamed. Such a ministry, enlightened and sanctified, is essentially needed, when profane knowledge has reached an advanced state, when error and infidelity abound, and when subtle and active opposers of sound doctrine bring to their aid all the stores of human learning.

The Scriptures are to be translated into the different languages of the nations of the earth ; heathen adversaries are to be confounded ; the errors of false religious systems and of a corrupted Christianity are to be exposed, and their advocates are to be instructed and guided into the more excellent way of the gospel. While piety is undoubtedly the essential and most important qualification of a minister, piety alone is not sufficient.

There are still some who affect to despise learning as a qualification for the ministry, and who quote the example of the Apostles as authorizing unlettered men to exercise that office, forgetting that they were faithfully and fully educated in the school of Christ before they received their commission to preach the gospel, yea, after they had been with him and enjoyed his

immediate instructions for at least three years ; and when, after his resurrection, he had continued with them forty days, expounding to them the Scriptures, teaching them the nature of his kingdom, and the mysteries of his religion, he enjoined them to tarry at Jerusalem until they should receive the Holy Ghost ; and they did wait, and did receive the Spirit according to promise, in an extraordinary measure, qualifying them for their work. As men do not now enjoy such advantages, and have no promise of being prepared for the ministry in a miraculous manner, they must by diligent study acquire their theological knowledge, and be carefully trained under the supervision of the Church.

3. They must be sound in the faith, and must preach a pure gospel.

The importance of holding fast and of teaching the truth as it is in Jesus, appears from the nature of the case. God has a high and worthy end to accomplish by the ministry, even the manifestation of his own glory in the salvation of sinners. He has appointed means adapted to that end ; the nature and use of which, as well as the end to be accomplished, display in an eminent and peculiar manner his glory ; are adapted to humble the pride of the sinner, and to form the Christian character. These means are the teaching and preaching of Christ and him crucified ; the gospel of the grace of God ; holding fast and holding forth the form of sound words given by inspiration.

It is by the faithful use of these only, that God is made known and can be honoured, and that the sinner can be saved ; wherefore, he will bless no other means. Not to use them, or to pervert them, or to substitute something else in their place, though it may be professedly to secure the same end and be called another gospel, is inconceivably criminal in the sight of God ; being rebellion against him, a disregard of his authority, a misrepresentation of his perfections ; putting a slight upon and setting aside his infinite wisdom ; robbing him of the revenue of praise which would be brought to him, and depriving the sinner of the only means of salvation.

That radical, spiritual, and entire change of character, which must take place to prepare the sinner for heaven, can be effected through the knowledge, belief and obedience of the truth only. As it is in the natural world—like produces like, good seed produces good plants, and good trees good fruit—so is it in the moral world ; every doctrine, every sentiment and opinion, of a practical nature, will produce its like in the soul, on the character, and in the life. The character will answer to that which has formed it, and correspond to the principles and motives of action, as the impression on the wax answers to the seal by which it is made. Truth will produce right impressions, right sentiments and dispositions, and correct conduct ; error, which is opposite to it, must produce opposite sentiments and conduct. Hence, we may to some extent

judge in advance of the character of men, from the doctrines they believe.

Truth is also represented as the proper aliment of the soul. The mind is to be stayed and strengthened by it. The spirit is to be refreshed and nourished by it, as the body is nourished with wholesome food. The believer through the knowledge of the truth increases with the increase of God; becomes stronger and stronger, and grows into the likeness of Christ; nor can the same effect be produced by poison, that is by error ministered to him. God must be apprehended as he is, that he may be adored and confided in. The sinner must know himself in his true state and character, that he may be humbled and renounce all self-confidence. He must apprehend the way of justification through Christ, or he can never receive forgiveness, peace, and eternal life. He must know the Saviour in the constitution of his person, in the exercise of his offices and in his work, or he cannot have him made unto him of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Obvious as all this appears to us, and although the Scriptures teach us that a knowledge of the truth is essential to salvation and to our happiness; though they exhort us to buy the truth and sell it not, also wisdom, instruction, and understanding, and caution us in the most solemn manner against error and the teachers of error, the importance of it is not realized.

⌚ This subject is one, concerning which there pre-

vails an alarming and most criminal indifference. We are told that it is of little importance what we believe; that there are good people of all creeds; that ignorance respecting many truths, about which there is such a diversity of sentiment, cannot be a bar to salvation; that if the heart is only right and the intention good, no questions will be asked about our faith. Thus, mixing some truth with error, and confounding creeds with names or different denominations, many are misled, and induced by those commonplace observations to pride themselves upon their superior liberality and charity. It is, as we readily admit, a matter of small moment by what name we may be called. There are pious, faithful, and happy servants of God among all Christian denominations; but these all hold the same form of sound words. They all believe substantially the same doctrines. They all pray to the same God; have access by the same Spirit to the same Father, through the same Mediator, and obey his commandments and observe his ordinances. They, being many, are one in Christ and members one of another.

As to the goodness of heart and intention, we all know that God looketh on the heart, and requireth truth in the inward man. If the heart be right with God; if the prevalent desire and aim be to the Lord; if the habitual intention be to please and honour God in all things, the life will be consistent; and it will be the evidence that the person has been accepted and saved through Christ, and has received a new heart and a right



spirit ; and no one will be more willing and ready to acknowledge the natural deceitfulness and wickedness of his heart, that in his flesh there dwells no good thing, and that the present changed state of his heart has been produced by the Spirit of God, through the knowledge and belief of the truth, than he himself. But the heart cannot be right, the intention cannot be upright, without correct views of God in Christ, and of the system of truth taught in the Bible. Can the heart of that sinner be right, who regards the Supreme Being as too merciful to punish sin? Does he honour God, who makes him like himself, and who denies his justice and his providence? Will his religion be the same, his obedience just as strict and acceptable, and his life as holy, as though he believed in an essentially holy God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and cannot look upon sin ; in a God at hand, who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will, and numbers the very hairs of our head? Can his heart be right, can he be humble, and feel his indebtedness to the grace of God, who thinks that human nature has received very little injury from the fall ; that man's dispositions are naturally good, though they may be corrupted by example ; that by proper culture of the natural powers he may commend himself to the favour of God, and secure for himself happiness beyond the grave? Can he feel the same anxiety about his state ; be as importunate in prayer, and as careful to avoid sin, as though he believed himself to be lost and help-

less, and felt that unless he can obtain mercy he must perish ; and that if God does not save him and change his heart, he cannot be saved ? Can his heart be right with God, who rejects his only begotten and well beloved Son as a Saviour, and degrades him to the condition of a mere man ? Can he have access to God, or know the Father, who does not know the Son, nor acknowledge him as the way, the truth, and the life ; who sets aside his atonement, his merits and intercession, and the mission by him of the Holy Spirit ? Can he have as good a hope, and feel as grateful for it ; will he be just as devout, have as intimate communion with God, as much peace and joy, be as safe in the judgment and as happy throughout eternity, as though he did believe that the name of Jesus was the only name given under heaven among men whereby we can be saved ; that he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, having been made perfect through suffering, and being God almighty, God all-sufficient ? But we need not further illustrate the absurdity of this popular sentiment. The truth of God has been revealed, may be discovered, being distinguished by certain infallible marks, and must be believed by us, that by its influence on the soul, through the operation of the Spirit, we may be healed of all our spiritual maladies.

Now, from all this we may learn the importance of such a ministry, and the obligation resting upon the Church to furnish it ; and also the high and fearful

responsibility of those who may be more immediately charged with the duty of training and preparing men for it. For whilst it is acknowledged to be the prerogative of God to raise up and qualify men for the ministry, he has at the same time enjoined it as a duty on the Church to pray to him, as the Lord of the harvest, to send forth labourers into his harvest; which prayer includes in it the duty which is elsewhere expressly required, of seeking out, of training and watching over faithful men, who may teach others also, and enter the fields which are white to the harvest. And if men are to be taught, and proved, and carefully prepared for the ministry, it can be done more effectually, and in a shorter time, at a public school of the prophets like this, in which a number of teachers may devote their whole time to their instruction, and, by a division of labour, attend more thoroughly to the different branches of their education, than in private by a single pastor, whose ministerial duties and domestic avocations engross the largest portion of his time. If there has been disappointment experienced by the churches, as to the standard of ministerial excellence and qualifications in young men educated at Theological Seminaries, it surely has not arisen from the greatly increased means of instruction furnished by them, nor from the peculiar advantages of social and religious intercourse enjoyed in them. We should rather look for the cause in the lack of talent and application in the candidates, or in the short time

spent at the seminaries ; the hurried manner in which the course of instruction is in some instances necessarily passed over ; and also in the change of taste among the people, and their advancement in knowledge. Who does not know that the churches and congregations of this land require discourses of a far higher order than those which satisfied their fathers ; and at the same time demand a vast increase of ministerial labour in fostering and sustaining benevolent institutions, and thus abridge the pastor's hours of study ? But we need not stop to argue the question, whether in the present state of the Church and of society, and in view of the pressing demand for ministers, we require Theological Seminaries. Our Church has long since decided the question ; and her experience, with the blessing of God upon her efforts, to furnish what she has judged the best means of a religious and Christian education for those who are seeking the ministry, has proved the wisdom of her decision. Who can estimate the influence for good, the salutary, conservative, and saving influence, which this Seminary has been permitted to exert during the brief period of its operations ? What would have been the condition of our Church without it ? Would the same number of men have reached the ministry, or could they have entered on their labours as soon, and with equal qualifications ; could we have had as much union in the truth, unity of the Spirit, and uniformity, which, when it is according to the Scrip-

tures, contributes so much to the strength, comfort, and edification of the churches; could we have secured as great a degree of Christian harmony and communion among our people; could the demand for pious, intelligent, and faithful ministers at home among our own teeming population, and at our missionary posts among the heathen, have been met to the extent of even the present partial supply; could we have realized the incidental advantages, those salutary and precious influences which have been exerted by the Professors through their writings, and which are enjoyed by the Church universal, if this Seminary had not been established? We think not; and therefore, whilst we feel thankful for what has been done, we would regard it as an earnest only of what may still, with the blessing of God, be accomplished through its instrumentality.

You, my dear brother, have been called in Providence to take a part in the labour of sustaining the reputation, of adding, if possible, to the increasing importance and usefulness of this institution, and of aiding in the preparation of such a ministry as I have endeavoured to describe, and as was contemplated by the founders of our Seminary. The Church has expressed her confidence in you, as one qualified to be a teacher of those who are to be her ministers. A higher honour could not have been conferred—a place of greater responsibility cannot be occupied. Allow me to congratulate you on the event, more especially under the

peculiar and beautifully interesting circumstances of your introduction to this field of labour, having for your coadjutors a venerated father and a beloved brother. Had you been left to your own choice, you could not have brought yourself into a more delightful employment, or a more desirable and pleasant copartnership in labour. As you have accepted and been regularly inducted into this office, it has been made my duty, as one of the representatives of the Church which has appointed you thereto, and in behalf of the Board of Directors of this Seminary, solemnly to charge you to be faithful to the trust committed to you in this new relation. I do this the more willingly and frankly, because I can do it without any feeling of suspicion or apprehension, and because I know the importance of the work is felt by no one more sensibly than by yourself; that the interests of the Seminary are as dear to you as they are to us; and the doctrines which we desire to be taught are those which you love, and have publicly and repeatedly professed. We charge you, therefore, to continue of the same mind; hold fast the form of sound words which you have received, and teach none other things than such as are contained in it, or are consistent with it. Although in your immediate department you are not required to give direct instruction in the doctrinal truths of the Bible, yet in tracing the evidence of God's goodness and faithfulness in the history of his Church, and of the tendency to apostasy in man, you will be called to notice those errors which

have marred her beauty, disturbed her peace, and retarded her progress, and will have an opportunity of refuting them, and of guarding the youth under your care against them. Certain it is, that those who are left to fall into error, do and will find occasions to teach it in every department. We therefore feel it to be essential to the good character and welfare of the Institution, and to the safety of the students, that all our professors and teachers should be sound in the faith. Especially is it required of you to teach clearly, explicitly, and strongly, the true nature, the scriptural organization, government, and discipline of the Church of God. The department of Church History and Church Government, always important, is peculiarly so in the present day; when we are in danger of losing our ministerial character and our church standing, when we are denied our privileges as Christians, by those who maintain that the validity and efficacy of religious ordinances depend upon an invisible and imaginary influence communicated by a broken chain containing as all acknowledge many corrupt links, reaching back as is supposed to an earthly head, instead of the authority of Jesus Christ and the promised influences of the Holy Spirit. These men would cover up our title deed from the great Supreme and only Head of the Church, with rubbish gathered from the fathers and ancient authors. The old preposterous and exclusive claims of the Man of Sin are again to be refuted. The old controversy respecting the religion of sacraments,

having been revived with fresh pretensions, must be engaged in and settled over again. The contest for ecclesiastical despotism and domination must again be resisted, but all with spiritual weapons. Bring to light all that the Bible and that history teach on this subject, and so instruct the youth under your care, that they may be able to not only resist for themselves, all temptations to embrace the fooleries of Popery in every form, but also instrumentally to deliver others out of them.

I need not remind you of the importance of taking heed to yourself. In proportion to the responsibility of your office as a teacher here, is the obligation on you to maintain an humble, a close, and an intimate walk with God. You need his grace and strength to enable you to discharge your arduous duties, and at the same time to set an example of diligence and prudence, of watchfulness and prayer, of self-denial and devotedness, of meekness, gentleness, patience, perseverance, and love, which may be safely followed by those whom you instruct. It is your happiness to know, from past experience, the answer to the question, Who is sufficient for these things? and also, how your soul may be kept prosperous and in health. Abide in that heaven-born knowledge, and cultivate that precious experience. Thou, that teachest others, do not forget to teach thyself. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant. Them that honour me, I will honour, saith the



Lord. We know that they only are safe whom he keeps. The melancholy instances of backsliding, of falling into sin and of apostasy, on the part of some who once stood high in the confidence of the Church, stand out in her history as beacons, giving us solemn warning, not to be high-minded, but to fear. Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall, for it is not in man that walketh, to direct his steps. Men of talent and learning appear to be more in danger than others of falling into error. They are tempted to speculate upon and about the truth, to indulge in self-confidence and pride of erudition. They attempt to be wise above revelation, to pry into the secret things of God. Aiming at new discoveries in theology, they torture the sacred text; by ingenious and plausible criticisms, adopt a forced construction which may countenance their bold and presumptuous conjectures, and thus offend God. They are wise in their own conceit, forget to pray, and indulge in a haughty spirit. God resisteth the proud, and as a punishment for their refusing with an humble and childlike spirit to believe the truth on his authority, he gives them up to strong delusions that they should believe a lie. In no other way can we account for the lengths in error and absurdity to which some men of gigantic intellect and of the greatest learning have been left to go.

On the other hand, the humble, the meek, those who are willing to sit at the feet of Christ and learn of him, and are prepared to receive the kingdom of

God as little children—have the promise of his grace, of his teaching, guidance, and preservation unto life everlasting. And now we commend you to God, who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy ; and to the word of his grace which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are justified ; praying that he would make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for ever and ever. AMEN.

The Value of Church History to the Theologian of our Day.

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AN INAUGURAL DISCOURSE.

BY

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## INAUGURAL DISCOURSE.

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REVEREND DIRECTORS OF THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, REVEREND MINISTERS OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, and CHRISTIAN BRETHERN OF EVERY NAME, who here afford us your countenance, and gladden this occasion by your presence ; I should meet you with less of sadness, were it not for the absence of that venerable man, whose induction to this chair I distinctly remember six-and-thirty years ago, whose paternal guidance many of us have since enjoyed, and whose useful and eminent discharge of this function might well cause trembling in his successor. Let us therefore hasten to look away from men, even the best, to the Great Head of the Church, who will bless both his aged servant and this school to which his life has been devoted.\*

The usage which convokes this respected auditory, at the same time enjoins on the speaker a topic which shall not be alien from the work to which you have called him from the delightful labours of a beloved

\* The Rev. Samuel Miller, D.D., LL.D., Emeritus Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Church Government, departed this life while these sheets were in the press, to wit, on the 8th day of January, 1850.

congregation. Give me then your favourable ear, while I attempt to set forth THE VALUE OF CHURCH HISTORY TO THE THEOLOGIAN OF OUR DAY.

I. The value of Church History might be argued FROM ITS GENERAL CONTENTS.

There is in the matter of Church History an intrinsic value, which is the basis of all its importance to any class of minds. As a record of facts, history is a record of what God our Creator and Redeemer has seen fit to bring into existence in the course of his providence; and therefore a record, in part, of God's manifest glory, in his conduct of human affairs: this indeed is the truest notion of all history. For it is this reference of all that takes place in time to the will of God, which gives unity to the otherwise disjointed annals of our race. More specially, Church History is the record of God our Saviour, in the unfolding of the method of grace; and is thus a history dear to Christ himself, as being that of the Church, which is his body, to which he is united, and also the history of what the adorable Spirit of Christ is doing, in regenerating and compacting and glorifying the elect people. It may even be called the history of mankind, as it is the history of that portion of mankind, from the beginning to the end of the world, which God has chosen to be the depository of his grace, together with all that portion, adjacent to every part of the series, which has a visible though imperfect connection with the development of the spiritual work.

The interest which a human mind should take in such a record is to be measured by the value of God's manifestation of himself; which is so far from being by naked propositions, even of fundamental truth, that it is chiefly by life and act. The acts of free creatures, which accomplish God's plan and reveal his attributes, are a part of the manifestation of God. This estimate of history at large is applicable with peculiar force to the history of the dispensation of grace and the growth of the Church. Hence it is remarkable, that of the sacred books which make up our only rule of faith and life, a remarkable number consists of histories of the Church. It is true of the Old Testament as well as the New; and though when we have journeyed to the close of this period our hand must drop the clew of prophets and apostles, neither the Church nor its history ceases, but runs on to our own day, and will run on to the time of the restitution of all things. It would be strange if the unfolding of a providence, so wonderful in that part of the progress which inspiration reveals, should just there cease to be of value; passing strange, if while invited to adore a God who wrought mightily and graciously in the era of the Apostles, we were forbidden to trace his footsteps of grace in the ages that approximate his return. Every principle, on which we judge the histories of the Bible important objects of inquiry, goes to prove the importance of subsequent annals of Christ's Church, even though we admit our infinite loss in parting with a divine historian. Such

are the reasons why we may in general hold ecclesiastical history to be valuable to the Christian of every age.

II. But we must go further, and look at Church History in its connection with the most glorious of all intellectual objects, namely, THE TRUTH OF GOD. It is a record, not of bare events, though of these it has its abundance, but of the progress of revealed knowledge. Here our topic is nothing less than the perpetual struggle of truth against error. Revealed theology, though from its nature infinitely pure and absolutely and unalterably perfect, admitting of no progress within itself, is nevertheless constantly modified by the condition of the recipient, is constantly suffering opposition, is tending constantly to triumph, is occasionally undergoing eclipse, but is seen finally reigning in divine supremacy. The account of this struggle is vastly more stirring than the report of courts or wars. The Church is the recipient of this gradual illumination from the word. Her external annals are but the earthen lamp of this burning luminary. Leave out of Church History the development of doctrinal faith, and you reduce it to the most meager of all chronicles, though you fill it with names and dates and schisms and martyrdoms. This struggle of truth for mastery accompanies us through every part of the career; and each successive hour of conquest remains as a memorable epoch. For example, take the early question of Judaic observance; the Gnostic and the Arian, the Nestorian the Eutychian, the Pelagian and the Socinian



periods. In each instance, there was a formidable struggle and a settlement: for though all did not concur in any case, yet the struggle had reached its acme and the progress went on. That theologian would be poorly furnished, who should learn the points of absolute truth only thetically, and should know nothing of the successive agonies of the Church, in bringing each of these tenets to its due and scriptural predominance: compared with such mental wrestlings, the feuds of kings and of nations are tame. The theologian of our day needs no part of sacred training more than the history of doctrine, as unfolded in the mind of the Church, and the establishment of scriptural truth over the resistance of falsehood. The monuments of this warfare of past ages exist in many venerable shapes. The controversies of every period form a large part of sacred authorship. Every symbol or creed marks the adjudication of a case, the settlement of a quarrel, the triumph of a doctrine; and the pyramids are not more solid or more august than the utterances of Nicaea, of Augsburg, of Dort, and of Westminster.

The history even of errors is full of instruction and interest; and eminently so in our age of liberty, when whosoever will may glory in any, even the most ancient blunders. On no other supposition but that of utter strangeness to the great polemics of the Nicene period, and the exhaustive analysis and exquisitely keen nomenclature of the Greek defenders of Trinitarian truth, can we account for the assured

simplicity with which obsolete heresies, with all their obsolete props, are this moment set up with a parade of novelty very near our Church borders: it is worth the time even of reformers, to read antiquity, in order to learn how they were confuted before they were born, so that they may avoid appearing as stage-heroes, with the armour and watchwords of enemies dead and buried a thousand years ago.

It is a sound reason for studying Church History, that it furnishes caveats against the errors of the age. Marvellous would it be if it did not; if there had been hundreds of years of Christ's government, and yet no settlement of barriers. I know, indeed, that we live in an age of progress and development, and that these phrases are dinned into the ears of our very babes at school; but marvellous would be that progress and development, which should show no progress in quieting absurdity and no development of abiding truth. There is a real progress in Christianity, which is like the progress of human science, in this respect, that its stages are marked by fixed points. Our age forgets this. Ptolemy and Tycho Brahe are no longer brought out to be slain afresh; but Sabellius and Eutyches live and expire again for each successive generation. Let us be consistent with ourselves. If experience ever teaches, it may teach communities, and if communities, then the Church, which is the only undying community, the only community in which Christ dwells. The men of our age need to know what Christ has been

doing in foregoing ages, in this school of his, which is always learning; sometimes by bitter lessons, yet always learning. Few are hardy enough to stand up and deny that there is an experience of the Church, yet many do so constructively, by banishing all the history which details this experience into a corner. This is to be lamented, because pious and zealous men, by views so narrow, do just so much to prolong controversies and to break down providential dikes against error.

If it is asked, how acquaintance with the struggles of truth in former days aids us in the struggle of our own, it might suffice to reply, just as the modern art of war is the result of the strategy of all time. But, more particularly, let it be observed by the theologian of our day, that error is not so original as it vaunts itself to be. The human mind is limited in its very vagaries. The enemy of souls, with all his sleight, has but a certain number of cards in his pack. The same heresies appear and reappear, after centuries, as if in cycles. The vulgar Universalism of our day, in all its forms, is depicted in Augustine's "City of God." What is called Transcendentalism, fresh as it looks to novices, shows not unlike certain visions of the schoolmen. The Gorgon of Gnosticism glares on us through the grinning visor of the modern Pantheist; and in the Gnostic himself, recent research has detected the family resemblance of the Buddhist and the Parsee. Serpentine Pelagianism, though trampled

on by Catholic decisions, was not killed, and among Protestants as well as Papists has crawled in again, wherever a door was left ajar. It is something gained to nail an error to the board, that our children may know it when it reappears in the currency. History shows us, not only that errors are the same, but that errorists traverse the same lines. Whosoever has risked the dread responsibility of unsettling the common faith of evangelical Christendom, has always run, though he knew it not, in the old doublings; so that one may predict that a denier of the Trinity, or a denier of grace, will describe a given curve. For example, he will decry all former conclusions; he will expunge all human, that is, symbolical phrases, which define truth as against his own errors; he will plead for the very words of Scripture text, which he evacuates of their meaning; he will shun categorical statement; he will sing of charity, and stretch imploring arms towards every latitudinary sect.

The mode in which theological error has diffused itself has been strikingly the same. In regard to this the humble student learns to be on his guard against the beginnings. He further reads that God's method of gracious deliverance from abounding error has been much the same in all ages, by the effusion of his Holy Spirit, and the raising up of Augustines, Luthers, Calvins, and Edwardses, at the instant juncture of his grace. And the student of history, contemplating the struggle, beholds for his encouragement, that the tri-

umph of truth, in respect to the portion of men through whom the vital succession is kept up, is certain. Such is but a sample of what history may do in regard to the study of Christ's truth.

III. But our subject has a special value in regard to the POLITY OF THE CHURCH.

It is not we, my brethren, who have made all grace dependent on the outward form of the visible Church; but neither our fathers nor we have despised it: and seeking in Scripture alone for the model of this sanctuary, we have been taught lessons by God's providence in the diversified shapes it has taken since primitive times. The careful reading of history brings one truth at least into high relief, to wit, that the assumption of an immutable polity and rite in the hierarchical bodies is without a basis in fact. The beginnings of these abuses, like all others, were too minute and too insidious to afford means of fixing dates; yet we can often trace the gradations of church-power from its youthful modesty to its imperial domination, with a fulness such as has no parallel in any genesis of civil government.

There are those with whom the Church question is the question of questions. It was always so with Rome; it will hereafter be so, by a ludicrous imitation, in all who shall affect the exclusive prerogatives of Rome. Till Rome conquered, this was an interest shared with Constantinople; now that Rome trembles, it is so with the dead churches of Asia, and those

in Western lands, who have no true notion of a church-essence but as something palpable. In history we descry not only the examples of this, but the stealthy encroachments by which the simple primitive structure grew into the present hideous colossal mass. Here, likewise, we fix the moments at which, from age to age, it has been thought safe to suborn ancient witnesses, to forge donations and decretals, and to transfer prescriptive corruptions to a pretended apostolic basis; as when, with Baronius, we discern in St. Stephen an archdeacon; when we find the primacy first propped up by St. Peter; when we detect the fabricated title-deeds of secular Romish power; and when we begin to see the orders of the more venerable continental churches disallowed by the Romanizing sons of Anglican Reformers, for lack of a supposed episcopal succession. Errors respecting polity can often be instantly set aside by looking into their pedigree. It is history, as the guardian of truth, that uncovers the sandy foundation of hierarchy; teaches us where to be on the watch, what tendencies to rebuke, what enemies to repel: and these great providential lessons are written by the finger of God. Before the student reads antiquity, he may meekly receive the dictum, that every curtain and pin of the tabernacle he beholds reared in the wilderness of the middle ages was adjusted precisely thus by the first Christians: such is the spirit of the Romish dogmas. But as he turns his eye to the pictured canvass of ages, as it passes before

him, what a panorama of changing scenes! What bubble is hollower than the notion of an apostolic unity in names, functionaries, human connections, rites, and postures! But it is not enough to know this by hearsay: the teacher of our day needs the vivid impression of its reality as derived from the slow pageant of tyrannical dignitaries and churchly princes. And thus impressed, he comes back to the simple truth of the New Testament—if I may borrow a figure from Archdeacon Hare—as one comes from the stifling atmosphere of an Italian church, redolent of tapers, incense, and fuming crowds, to the blessed fresh air of heaven. Thus emerging, he reads with new eyes, and more thankful heart, the divine charter of Unity in the Church; that there is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. And he more indignantly than ever for the rest of his life refuses to make scriptural unity reside in those things about which, above all others, the Scriptures are silent. Thus the study of history, while it reveals daily more and more the falsity of pretensions to unbroken lines of tradition, as to men or rites, and the monstrosity of deviations and mutations within the pretended circle of Catholic unity, compels him, with the delight of a bird escaped from the snare of the fowler, to find all his repose in the Church of the Spirit and the Word. Thus studying the perishable fortunes of

all human inventions, he rises to the truth of Christ, the sole Head, Lawgiver, and King; herein agreeing with one who was a master of Christian antiquity, an ornament of Scottish presbytery, and though the youngest, not far from the greatest, in the Assembly at Westminster: "It may be observed from the story of His passion, this (his kingship) was the only point of his accusation which was confessed and avouched by himself, was most aggravated, prosecuted, and driven home by the Jews, was prevalent with Pilate as the cause of condemning him to die, and was mentioned also in the superscription upon his cross."

IV. Church History is valuable to the Christian minister, for the CULTURE IT AFFORDS TO HIS INWARD PIETY.

It is true, Christian history may be so studied as to deaden all religion within us. Of the histories in use among us, nothing is so characteristic as their coldness. One might read them carefully without ever finding the principal thing. For what is the intimate and essential treasure of Christian history, and of the Church, if it is not Christ's religion, or the life of God among men? Leave this out, and you may have prosperous and adverse events, creeds and canons, enlargements and contractions, rites and ceremonies, developments of dogma, and suppression of heresy, but these are as cheerless as Egyptian temples, or sculptured cenotaphs. No wonder men have grown chilly in such chambers of the dead, among Church



annals which give them only sepulchral inscriptions. It is the life which once dwelt in these piles after which we are seeking ; and the search cannot be unedifying, for this is God's work among men. If the work of the Spirit in a single soul is lovely, wonderful, more worthy of profound study than the marvels of material planets and suns, how much more the work of the same Spirit in thousands, in systems of souls, in the body of Christ ! What a partial view of Christ's work among men it would be to judge only those histories of grace worth knowing which occurred before the close of the canon ! Each individual's spiritual life is a microcosm, and the operations of God are as varied in different souls as in different crystals, flowers, or worlds. Every conversion is a part of Church History. Every revival is a little system of God's working. The whole organism of Divine operations from beginning to end, in all lands, can be studied only in the next world ; but there is reason to believe it will be a chief study, since it is by the Church that principalities and powers in heavenly places know the manifold wisdom of God. To pursue this study now is only to learn more of that effusion which is the fruit of Christ's death, the work of Christ's Spirit, which is going on in us, and in all the family in heaven and in earth. If any man's religion is such as to be damaged by conversing with holy biography in all ages, it is a sign that his religion is factitious, and out of the analogy of faith. The

glory of Christ shines with boundless variety and riches in the experience of the Church; always the same, always different; and this is to be studied in the rich coloured texture of multiform piety, in all its individual traits; not the diaries of people of our own canton or century, but the widely differing yet brotherly experience of Polycarps, Wiclifs, Melancthons, Knoxes, and Simeons, formed by the same Spirit in circumstances remote from ours. The growing persuasion of this has given a biographical character to the Church History of our age, and there is no history which admits of being presented in biographical portraits so much as that of the Church. For Christianity in its regard for the humblest unit in the Church stands equally remote from both extremes, of absolute centralizing tyranny and infidel communism, which agree to swallow up the individual in the mass. And as Christ deals with the individual soul, his new creature, watching over its birth and growth with matchless love, so Christ's ministers will love the work of their Lord in the graces of all times, and hang over a single instance, as of Augustine in his Confessions, or of Chalmers in his Sabbath hours, as fondly as the botanist over a new species, or the chemist over a new metal. It is Christ's handiwork; surely we shall love and study the marks of his fingers. But time is short. We cannot stop to look at every gem in his cabinet, or every star in his heaven; we must deal with classes; we must regard the development of single provinces;

and the holy lineaments of communities, and Christian nations, through successive ages; and this is Church History. The guiding clew throughout the whole is the line of uniform spiritual influence, constantly going on in every member of the body. The investigation of these laws of gracious operation in actual history, the collation of them with the authoritative principles of Scripture, and with our own consciousness, and the adoring sight of God's ways and Christ's image in the entire body, are among the most heavenly employments of our pilgrimage. If active duties and sacrifices did not forbid, one might be willing to shut himself up and study the work of grace in the life of the Church. And the want of these catholic views of the work of Christ gives a mannerism and a pedantry and a provincial narrowness to our religion, more like the rigour of Judaism than the beautiful liberty of that Church, concerning which it is said, "there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit."

To say that the flow of such a vital piety, in its remotest circulation, in ancient Persia or Gaul, or in modern Greenland or Hawaii, is not good to be studied, good for the preacher, good for the hearer, good for the nurture of our faith, the kindling of our devotion, and the ordering of our practice, is to say that we have believed a cunningly devised fable. The experimental Christianity of past ages will sometimes bring strongly before us a phase of piety which looks strange in modern eyes, as contemplative, nay mystical;

yet is it not without instruction to the teachers of a generation who are exposed to the danger not only of measuring all religion by the quantity of motion, but of making its very essence reside in outward acts. God teaches us the evil of two extremes, of the active and the contemplative life, in events of unsurpassed greatness and vivid hues, and this teaching is Church History.

Is not Christ "the Head of every man," the head also of the Church? and can any man honour him and love him, and yet be indifferent to his vine, his turtle-dove, his Bride, his Body, for which he covenanted, for which he took flesh, for which he died, ascended, and sat down at the right hand of power; with which he is indissolubly joined; in which he lives; whose foes he will dash to pieces, and to whom he will give the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven? Or can the tidings of such a community be hurtful to any preacher's soul? Is Christ indifferent to this Church, or to its seasons of light and shadow? Is it not his "vineyard of red wine," which he keeps, and which he waters every moment? How then can he who loves Christ be indifferent to this body? Though it is invisible in its greatness, its parts are visible, with a visibility which is Christ-like; consisting not in an outward chain of putative succession, nor in ordination by certain hands, nor in the utterance of certain formulas, nor in worship with certain rites, nor in the baptizing with cer-

tain ways or waters, nor in absolute agreement about certain jots and tittles; but in those spiritual, holy, divine, and therefore catholic notes of the Church, of which Christ makes much, and of which Antichrist makes nothing. To detect the products of this secret life, which has been visibly the same in every age, to recognise it, to trace it, to love it, and to emulate it, is the delightful work of Church History. Here are the genuine memorials of the fathers; here are the true relics of the saints; not to be registered in calendars and graven on stone, and worshipped as idols, but to be followed, and by grace surpassed. If experience is valuable in our own hearts, then in the hearts of others; if in what is contemporary, then in what is past; if of one age, then of all ages. The diversity is infinite of God's spiritual operation in his Church; and heaven will make this more obvious. Next to the study of God's work in Scripture, is the study of God's work in the later Church; more refreshing than the canons of councils and the rolls of changeful clergy, and the politics of the curia, and the tactics of scholastic armies. Here is Christ's perpetual work, always beginning, never ending, enriching earth and replenishing heaven, sealed by blood of martyrs, and widely unfolded in mighty works of philanthropy, valour and humane legislation, of which the honour, though all Christ's, is every day filched by the plagiarizing philosopher, infidel, and economist. To behold this work multiplied among myriads of converted

tribes, nations, and races, is to behold a work worthy of God's energy and worthy of our honour; and it is the subject of Church History.

V. Church History is valuable to the ministry from its bearing on *EVANGELICAL MISSIONS*.

The missionary or apostolic character of the Church was impressed on its very beginnings, even from the day when Christ broke in upon the table of the eleven, as they sat together, benumbed with doubt and wonder, as to the report of his resurrection, and upbraided them, and added, "Go ye into all the world." The history of the primitive age is a mission-history. The torch snatched from hand to hand passed to the confines of the known world. Singly or in groups the disciples pierced into the solid masses of heathenism, and left their footsteps marked with blood. This tendency to speed from the centre towards the circumference, is so far essential to the light of life, that we find it, even long after clouds of error had arisen, working wonders in ages which we are forced to deem grossly corrupt. So that it is wonderful how Christians of any period could study the history of their fathers, and not see that to be a Christian was to be a missionary. Volumes might be filled with the recital of such works of daring, as would put our tardy efforts to shame, showing how they continued to regard the Gospel as a mystery to be made known to all nations for the obedience of faith. The map of Christendom gives the lines of these conquests. All that is now

nominally Christian, was once heathen. The limits of the titular Church extended far beyond the limits of modern Christianity; for the false prophet has since appropriated immense tracts that were once evangelized; and the Arab wanders over African wastes, that were filled with thousands of churches. How few there are who adequately estimate those missions, which could result in such dense Christian populations as covered what are now the wildernesses of Barca, Tunis, and Algiers. Equally vigorous were the assaults Eastward in Asia, and Northward and Westward among the Celtic and Germanic tribes. Can it be uninteresting to trace the steps of our Redeemer in these ancient missions, which during many centuries carried forward and outward the frontiers of the Church? But it is our history which marks this progress; and its lessons are seasonable and momentous; good for every Christian, and especially good for the Christian ministry of our day. It teaches us how truly Christian faith and love work towards the evangelizing of the nations. It teaches the modern missionary how the ancient missionary went to work, in circumstances often precisely similar. It stimulates to a holy emulation of zeal and self-sacrifice, of patience and courage, which all the legends of martyrology cannot altogether discredit. It rebukes the coldness and cowardice of our age of commerce, arts, and peace, by the struggles and success of an age of warfare and ignorance. It brings forth the tattered manuscripts of

Greek and Latin apologies, or controversies with heathen, the archetypes of defences which issue from mission presses among Moollahs, Bonzes, and Bramins. It unrolls to us the early endeavours of the Justins and the Origenes, who had a more lordly paganism than that of our day to triumph over, and shows us that by Christ's grace they triumphed. Next to the books of inspiration, which are so largely missionary records, the modern apostle has no such source of instruction and no such provocative to courage, and no such earnest of conquest, as the books of Church History. Nor is it to be doubted, that in this historic age of ours, just in proportion as churches become missionary churches, will the students of sacred antiquity labour to follow out the lines of that great progress, which made the centuries preceding hierarchical stupor so remarkable for the spread of truth. For be it remembered, that the Church has always been most in motion when most alive, and that truth preceded error. Those great masses of Oriental Christianity which are now bereft of all life, and retain only the trappings of religion and imagery of the Church, resembling in their petrified state the fossil remains of a former period, still serve to indicate the spots and the times in which there was a vigorous vitality; and this vitality was the product of Christian Missions. The very saints, whose graces have been forgotten, amidst the fables of hagiologies and breviaries, and who have been turned into the demigods of a new Pantheon, were often



genuine disciples, and evangelists among the Gentiles. When we study to sever the precious from the vile, we are only gaining helps for the missions of a new era now dawning. It is our hope and prayer, that the day may never return, when it shall be thought a little thing to be Christ's missionary, or when the work of lengthening these cords shall be deemed to require less than the very best and highest that the Church has of scholarship, eloquence, and grace. To dispel such an illusion, we have only to read aright the annals of Church History.

If this illustration should seem too much confined to earlier periods, let it be remembered, that the line of our research brings us down to that great revival of religion, which we name the Protestant Reformation; and shows us how, in the morning watch, the Lord can look through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and trouble the host of the Egyptians. What a lustre of truth and life was that which God's Spirit caused to radiate over half Europe, from Wittenberg, Geneva, and and a few like centres! What an encouragement to expect unexampled awakenings and conversions, when a later glory shall answer our as yet too straitened prayers, and shed the promised day over our peaceful warfare against idolatry, superstition, and universal fraud and falsehood! These encouragements Divine Providence utters to us, in the history of the Church.

VI. Finally, Church History is valuable to the theologian, because it aids in the STUDY OF THE FUTURE.

It is as surely our duty to study the future progress of the Church as it is admitted that God has in a certain measure revealed it. To his omniscience the future is as present as the past; and of this future we dare not inquire any further than Scripture teaches; but those things which are revealed, even though prophetic, belong unto us and to our children for ever. No difficulty of exegesis can reduce this obligation to a nullity, unless it can be shown that God's Book is given that it may not be understood. The most difficult book of all, and that which closes the canon, has on its seal the most explicit benediction for those who read, hear, and keep it. Great errors have been made, a thousand times, in the interpretation of prophecy, but greater, more fundamental, and more fatal, in the interpretation of doctrine; even as it is a worse shipwreck to fall upon the head-stone of the corner, by making the Pope Christ's vicar, than to miscalculate the time and times and the dividing of time. The evil has not been in seeking to interpret God's predictions, but in interpreting them amiss. Nor is it safe or scriptural to leave all prophecy to await a determination by the events prophesied, since it may be the purpose of God, in our case, as we know it was in the case of Daniel, to prepare the Church for events yet to come; and the chart of their course, or prospective history of these events, is prophecy. Diverse

as have been the schools of prophetic interpretation, and diametrically opposed as their conclusions have been, there is one thing in which they have all agreed. With one consent they have sought the meaning of prophetic indications, by comparing the letter of the text with the events of actual history, which is partly in the Bible and partly in uninspired annals. Not one step can be taken in any interpretation without recourse to history, so that all great works on prophecy are to a large extent historical. The more profound and extensive the minister's knowledge of what is past, the more his ability to determine whether the prophetic statement is past or future, whether the word of the Lord is fulfilled or unfulfilled. The few points which are fixed in the belief of the Church, concerning prophetic application, some of them being included in our confessions, have been fixed by applying prophecy to history. It would be futile to argue that the Pope is Antichrist with one who knew not the rise and progress of popedom; and this is history. And it would seem superfluous to urge a maxim so elementary and obvious, were it not practically denied every day. If, however, it is conceded, then it follows that for a more penetrative insight into the prophetic Scriptures there must be a more diligent sounding of the deep sea of history. How true this is appears from the fact, that whenever any man devotes himself to prophetic interpretation, in whatever age, or of whatever school, whether Augustine, Bossuet, or Newton, that

moment he is seen to unlock the treasure-house of history. If, then, the history of the past is auxiliary to the history of the future, it becomes a question of vast moment in what manner to read Church History.

There never was an age of the Church in which the eyes of believers were more turned with expectation to the impending period, or more anxiously searching for guiding lights in the word of God. Even those who are the most resolute in closing their eyes against every claim to an exposition of prophecy, have yet their own traditionary expositions, and these expositions involve the study of the sublime past, in order to prepare for the sublimer future. The popular doctrine of a thousand years of spiritual glory before the judgment, and the revived opinion of Christ's advent before the thousand years, though irreconcilably opposed, are equally claiming support from that series of events in the providence of the Church which terminates in our unexampled position at the present hour, when dynasties and governments are dashing one another to pieces, and science and art are working yet more rapid revolution in society; on either prophetic hypothesis, to prepare the way of the Lord. If in any sense, even the most moderate, there is a law of divine operation in the sequence of events, no less than in the changes of nature; if it is allowable to investigate this law; and if the investigation is best pursued by comparing the symbols of the Holy Spirit with the work of providence and grace, as already

unfolded, then for our expectation and faith and labour towards Christ's coming work, there is no preparatory discipline more indispensable than the history of the Church. Even if without it we could encourage our friends, we cannot meet our enemies. In the approaching conflict, we cannot prevent their using weapons from this armoury; and he must be a dull reader of signs around him who does not perceive that in an age of unparalleled projection, adventure, change, and accomplishment, there is not a scheme for the future, in politics or religion, which does not found itself on inductions from history.

Looking around us, we see abundant reason for arming the Christian minister with all the wisdom and courage which can be derived from the past. This is forced upon us equally by a survey of the Church and of the world. In spite of the lulling strain which well-meaning friends of outward amity continue to sing, we behold tokens of peril, if not of judgment; signs that Christian graces are not keeping pace with science, civilization, and liberty, at least in the old territory of Christendom. For be it remembered to our caution, that Shiloh is to a proverb desolate; that the lights of the seven churches are quenched; that Alexandria is Mohammedan and Geneva heretical. The questions which our fathers debated, even at the risk of life, and the rights which they maintained, with arms in their hands, are no whit more stirring

than those which we foresee our sons must debate. Not petty scholastic niceties which may divide good men, but *stantis aut cadentis ecclesiae*. Whether the infinite Jehovah is a personal God, or a self-developing sum of all things; whether we rightly hold the Athanasian Trinity, or must accept a Sabellian Godhead in triple manifestation; whether Holy Scripture is inspired, or merely half inspired, or not inspired at all; whether there is a supernatural revelation of positive truth, or only a theology of reason; whether Atonement is expiatory, or merely dramatic; whether the ground of our acceptance with God is a forensic justification, or an infused or derived life of holiness; and whether there shall be eternal punishment, or finite punishment, or no punishment: these are the questions now rising for us, and rising within the churches of the Reformation. By a slow but inevitable process the distillations of the German alembic are coming to tincture the theology of Britain and America. The most alarming latitude widens around us; and heresies which all the Confessions of all the Reformed Churches, without a single exception, agree in denouncing, and at which even Rome revolts, are declared by ministers of religion not to touch the foundation. In such warfare it is well to have daylight, and to know the dogmas which are our enemies; for which purpose we cannot too sedulously study their portraits in the great gallery of ages. So much for caution, but we have much also for encouragement.

All history is filled with the trophies of faith over error. A vast and open field lies before Christ's people. The instrumentalities of science, art, and commerce, of international exchange, peaceful diplomacy, unexampled emigration, and unimagined rapidity of transit and intelligence, may be regarded as so many channels opened for the flow of truth and grace. Even were the old world submerged, we have a world at home. Our continent is the highway between the two great oceans; our language is spoken, and our Government is planted, on both shores. If Christianity were ambitious, it could crave no loftier enterprise; being humbly intent on setting up Christ's kingdom, it cannot but look abroad earnestly wakeful on such a domain. For such labours she demands soldiers, men of training, men of fire. Let us not shiver with pitiful dread of a too learned ministry, or betray our own cause by arraying learning and piety against each other. Let us not violate that union of the two which existed in the Reformers, and which the testamentary voices of Luther, Calvin, and Knox combine to enjoin. Let us install neither godless learning nor ignorant piety into the most solemn of all places, the chair of the teacher. Let us not divide those joint influences which, as we may see in the statistics of our own body, have been owned of God to spread our church-courts over all the republic, and into Asia and Africa. Among our Presbyterian fathers, we own the grace bestowed on learned Mel-

vill, and the impulse given to education by linking it with the preaching of the Word. In this great man his late eminent biographer found that "union of literature and religion, the importance of which to render one safe and the other successful was a favourite topic with him; and the dissolution of which, or what he called 'the secularization of literature,' he always regarded as one of the most ominous symptoms of our times." In this single point the teaching of Church History, above all of Reformation history, awakens the American ministry as with the sound of a trumpet.

Yet equally loud is the warning from every period of declining Protestantism, in Wittenberg or in Cambridge, against the substitution of learning for grace. If our students, if our ministers, above all, if our theological instructors ever cease to regard the holding forth of Jesus Christ out of a believing heart, with holy life and self-sacrificing zeal, as the paramount duty, that day will mark our catastrophe as a Church. Let us pray together, that God, of his infinite mercy, would avert from us so great an evil, and bless us with his perpetual grace.

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