

ADDRESSES

*DELIVERED AT THE INAUGURATION OF REV. JONATHAN EDWARDS,
D. D., LL.D., AS PROFESSOR OF DIDACTIC AND
POLEMIC THEOLOGY IN*

DANVILLE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,

APRIL 17, 1878.

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Rev. JONATHAN EDWARDS, D. D., LL. D.,

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CHARGE TO THE PROFESSOR ELECT

—BY THE—

Rev'd. A. C. DICKERSON, D. D.

DEAR BROTHER:

Having accepted the professorship of Theology in this Seminary, tendered to you by its Board of Directors; and having taken the pledges of fidelity to your official trust required by its rules; it only remains to call your attention, briefly, to the solemn responsibilities you have assumed. This a time-honored usage requires, and is in itself a fitting thing to be done. In delivering to you a solemn charge to be faithful to your engagements, we do not seek to intimate, even gently, that there are, in our apprehension, deficiencies to be corrected, or fears of official dereliction to be removed. We seek, simply, to awaken into active operation a virtue recognized by your brethren to be already possessed by you in an eminent degree. It is not that "you know not the Truth," nor that the "love of the Truth" does not burn upon the altar of your heart; but rather to stir up your "pure mind in the way of remembrance," that we solemnly charge you, in the name of the Master, and His Church, and as you shall give account in the day of judgment, to be earnestly intent upon your work, and that you make "full proof of your stewardship" in this high regard. No more responsible task could be assigned you by the Church or its Lord—none more dignified or honorable—none more important in its results—than that of *training* men to be *preachers* of the *Gospel*.

The Scriptural ideal of this sacred office is that of an ambas-

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sador of Christ, through whom God seeks and beseeches sinful, lost men to be reconciled to Himself, and thus saved from the otherwise irremediable ruin brought upon them by sin. It is accordingly a ministry of reconciliation. Its very *title* suggests its nature, and its qualifications for an honorable and successful discharge. An ambassador is one sent on a specific mission. Of the *nature* of this mission he is supposed to be *well advised*; and with its *objects* to be in *full sympathy*.

This definition, my brother, will suggest to your mind the grand summary of your duty as an instructor of our young ministry. According to the full measure of your ability, with the Divine assistance, it will be your high privilege and solemn obligation to acquaint them with the Gospel, as a *Plan of reconciliation* between an offended God and sinful men. This Plan contains all the elements of an official *negotiation*, and, in order to a successful issue, imperatively demands of the agent (the Preacher) a full and intimate knowledge of the *whole matter involved*, as well as a true heart-loyalty to the interests he represents. Hence the apostolical injunctions to the Church and its authorities not to commit the sacred trust to weak or ignorant men, to "novices," or men of vicious social relations; but to men well instructed in the Holy Scriptures—men who "know the Truth," and who are in heart in full sympathy with the Truth, and the great end of their works—men who are "constrained by the love of Christ," and with this grace, "naturally care for the souls" of men.

Accordingly, my brother, your work divides itself into two departments—to furnish your students with a knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, and by all possible appliances to bring their hearts into cordial submission to their authority—their heads with sound learning, and their hearts with grace. The accomplishment of these objects you will find to involve so much of both difficulty and labor as to call into requisition all of tireless vigilance, of persistent effort, and love-bearing patience you can well command; and even these sharpened by the acutest sense of responsibility; and by all the solemn interests involved, I beg you, let no love of ease, let no fear of giving offence, ever get between you and your duty in these regards.

Theology is the science of God; or, that treats of God—His

attributes, government, plans, and their final ends—these pre-eminently as they meet in the Gospel plan for the salvation of sinners. These are revealed in the Bible. This is God's book, in which He speaks to men in the forms of human language. What God *means* in this Book it is the great concern of men to know, of Christ's ministers to communicate, and the teachers of our young ministers to impart to their students. This, my brother, is the task you undertake—to draw from the sacred Scriptures, in the use of all possible appliances by which human language can be explained, and the *thought* it intends to express can be reached; and to so arrange, and systematize, and embody, and enforce the truths they contain, as that your pupils shall themselves properly appreciate them as matters of personal concern, and be "able to teach others also," and thus be faithful ambassadors for Christ.

Theology, in itself considered, has all the advantages of a *fixed fact*—something *settled*. Its great truths are, like their Divine author, the "same yesterday, to-day and forever." The Gospel plan of saving sinners has received and admits of no amendments, and the very possibility of an attempt so profane is sought to be forestalled by the most fearful denunciations against adding to or taking from what is revealed. Hence, with a *fixed criterion* to guide our exposition and take our bearings, we have only the difficulty in *making the calculation*, in defining the language and getting at its meaning.

The difficulties of Theological instructions lie chiefly in the line of *adaptation* to the peculiar genius of the age, the current modes of its thought and expression. These vary from age to age. The philosophical speculations of each age have peculiar tendencies, and thence give special coloring to Scripture exposition, and thence to different and diverse theories, and this explains the different proportions in which the system of Divine Truth has entered into and characterized the preaching of different ages and countries, such as that of the Baptist, the early and later apostolic writings, the reformation in the sixteenth century, that of Whitfield and the Wesleys at a later period, and very notably that of the present day.

The practical wisdom of the Church and its ministry, and of Theological instructors especially, is to "discern the times" in

these relations, and to so adapt the formulation of the Gospel scheme to the peculiar tendencies and spirit of the times, as to make them auxiliaries, and not hindrances to the Truth.

Of all that is difficult, as well as vitally important, in such adaptation, our own age is itself a fruitful example, not an exception. Never was the human mind awakened to such activity. Never was that activity developed in so many different channels. Never was it imbued with so adventurous a spirit. No subject escapes its notice. No foundations, however hoary with age or sanctioned by usage, are too sacred for its scrutiny. Never was the conflict between the true and the false waged so fiercely along the whole line of battle.

This, however, should occasion neither surprise nor regret. It is at once the inspiration and the result of the *advance* of Christ's kingdom in the world. In physical distempers the conflict between disease and the remedy is never so sharp—the patient is never so sick—as just at the *crisis*; so these “last times upon which we are fallen” are marked by bolder attacks upon the whole system of evangelical truth. These attacks are more various in form, more diversified in the weapons of assault, and more bitter in spirit. Science, with its powerful hold upon human conviction, and its deep appreciation in the heart, is sought to be arrayed against the Divine authority of the Bible; and, indeed, is claimed to have demonstrated its falsity.

A kindred feature of the times, demanding especial attention in the instruction of our rising ministry, is the *restless impatience* of the restraints of *established* authority, of the slow methods of experience, and of the control of *settled principles*. Nothing is acceptable to its impetuous temper but railroad speed and unrestricted license. The demand is boldly made for a more liberal construction of the entire ideal of religion, both doctrinal and emotional. Doctrinal preaching is dry, cold and restrictive. The absorbing idea is the emotion, law and control of *love*, distorting the symmetry of Truth. The law, as a “school-master to bring us to Christ,” has lost its occupation. The way to Heaven, if not *widened* here, must be *lengthened* so as to extend its opportunities beyond the grave. Christian joy is no longer to be cherished amid a cautious trembling, but in unmitigated assurance. Christian morality must be toned down

to suit the demand for greater conformity to the world.

These features of *our* times are portents of coming troubles. They demand a special *training* in the rising ministry, which allow me, my brother, to commend to your official notice. It will be your province, in the use of those rich and varied attainments, well understood by your brethren to be possessed by you in an eminent degree, to so utilize the unexampled facilities we enjoy, and so adapt the training of our candidates to the spirit of the age we live in, as to make them "workmen that need not to be ashamed," well fitted "for the Master's use," "mighty in the Scriptures," and abundantly competent to expound and defend the whole system of Divine Truth against all classes of opposers. That system is fully and appropriately formulated in our Westminster symbols to which you have pledged your adherence in both your own word and in your instructions to your pupils. See to it, my brother, that by no fault of yours, the coming ministry, as it issues from this Seminary, be "babes in knowledge, and that by no misdirected delicacy, your official sanction be given where due improvement has not been made.

But you will allow me now to call your very special attention to the second department of your tuitional care—the subjective Theology—the personal piety—of your students. This is of even greater importance than their learning. Without it, their ministry, however adorned with the graces of elocution, or sustained by theoretical knowledge, must of necessity be a failure. God will not be honored. Sinners will not be convicted. The heart of the ambassador must be in the ends he seeks to attain. He must be "constrained by the love of Christ," and animated by a sincere and ardent desire to save the souls of men. Here is the difference between a man who preaches to win souls, and one who preaches "merely to deliver a discourse." The minister's power for good is in the ratio of the truth he takes into his own heart. The salvation he brings to others must be a living force in his own soul. No practical mistake more fatal to the ends sought than that of investing a man with the ministerial office who has no heartfelt sympathy with the Gospel he is expected to preach. No greater cruelty could be inflicted upon the man himself. I charge you, my brother, never to give your official sanction as a help into the ministry, when you have

reason to discredit the candidate's piety! Give your students learning—all of it you possibly can! Theology is a science, and must be studied. The systematic relations of its truths must be understood; and this is knowledge. But Theology is also a *life* in the soul, and must be cultivated and developed. And, hence, a course of Theological instruction that is not attended by growth in grace—that does not lead the candidate to look deeply and closely to the foundation of his personal hopes—which does not enthrone in the soul, as the supreme governing aim and desire, the love of God and the souls of men—such a course of training has totally missed its aim, and is more than a failure.

It is true you can not originate grace in the soul! No, nor can you create mind to comprehend your instructions in Biblical learning. The Divine Spirit creates a state of grace in the soul; but as the early and later rains develop and mature vegetation, and, by the Divine blessing, diligent cultivation matures and perfects the crop, so, by diligent use of the means, the piety of the heart is matured and developed. Your department, in the division of the Seminary labors, affords special opportunities for the culture of the piety of the candidates. The Gospel truth you teach it is, which the Spirit uses in the work of sanctification; and hence, the process of instruction in that truth would seem to afford the greatest advantage for its personal application. Seek, my dear Brother, by all possible means, to secure this most to be desired result. Send the truth warm to their hearts. Teach them to regard the truth as matter of deepest personal concern to themselves. Here is the diverging point from which begin the different courses which mark an efficient from an inefficient ministry. Its great end is not the vain display of literary or elocutionary accomplishments, or the production of philosophical essays, but the preaching of the Cross of Christ for the salvation of men. Here is preaching, not of barren qualities, no distortions of the system of Truth, nor sacrifice of its vital forces to the demon of popularity; but the pure Gospel which is the power of God to salvation.

To the patient and courageous discharge of your high and sacred trust, you will find animation in the sacred memories which surround you. This school of the Prophets was founded in the prayers and sacrifices of a Godly generation. The men

who previously filled the chair you now assume, were men of marked ability and eminent services to the Church. The fruits of their labors remain in the successful ministry of many precious men of God, while some of equal eminence have fallen asleep. The fortunes of the Seminary, though for a season depressed, are, in Providence, again in the ascendant. Its interests are embalmed in many earnest, prayerful hearts, and among the elements of its coming prosperity we are glad to hail your advent as among the most promising. You can rest in the assurance that you have the confidence, the sympathy and the prayers of your brethren of the Synod in general, and of the Board of Directors in particular. May great grace be given you!

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

—BY THE—

Rev. JONATHAN EDWARDS, D. D., LL. D.

Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Board of Directors:

It was a great surprise to me when, last summer, I received, first by telegraph and soon after by mail, your invitation to the chair of Theology in this institution, then made vacant by the recent death of the Rev. Nathan L. Rice, D. D. It was as when in battle "a standard bearer fainteth," and the nearest man, much because he is the nearest, must take the banner and hold it aloft, if but for a season, lest its drooping should be perceived by the foe, and by them should be construed as a presage of defeat.

It was another surprise—to me no less than the former—when, after a few weeks of serious reflection upon the case, not without prayer for Divine direction, and after extensive consultation and correspondence, that I might to some extent ascertain the general mind of the church concerning this appointment, I found my way made plain to accept it. It was as when, again, in the conflict the front ranks are cut down and the rear becomes the van. Yet so it was ordered; and so came I promptly upon the ground and engaged without delay in the work to which it seemed that I was so clearly, though unexpectedly called.

And now it may be permitted that I make statement of some professional views and opinions with which I enter upon this work; which you and the church have a right to know, and which may indicate my estimate of both its measure and its

method. The course of Theological study to be pursued in this Seminary comprises

1. WESTMINSTER THEOLOGY; that is, *in extenso*, the Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms of the Presbyterian church, with definitions, illustrations, and Scripture proofs. This constitutes our department of Didactics.

2. THEOLOGY DIFFERENTIATED—the history of doctrinal opinions and differences, of sects and controversies. This will include all that is meant by Polemics; with a survey, both general and specific, of the whole field of organized opposition to the truth.

3. THEOLOGY SYSTEMATIC AND PRACTICAL: that is Theology with its contents scientifically classified and correlated, and the whole reproduced in its direct bearing upon human salvation, and the edifying of the Church of Christ.

This is the scheme of professional instruction to which I shall address myself; and to discuss it in some of its important, impressive relations will be the object of what further remarks I may offer on this occasion.

I.

The pre-eminence which is accorded to the Westminster standards in this scheme of instruction is no more than is justly their due. These venerable formularies constitute the latest, the best elaborated and the most complete of the symbols of Protestantism. They are commended to us alike by their date, their authorship and their contents.

1. The very times in which they were constructed furnish a presumption in their favor. The Reformation had enfranchised the human conscience, had enforced the right of private judgment, and had quickened in men an earnestness, an intensity, an eagerness for truth and freedom proportioned to the long restraint, the weary privation in which the world had for centuries been held by the spiritual despotism of Rome. The Revival of Learning, which preceded and accompanied the Reformation, had given to man a very important key of knowledge, in opening up the Humanities, the Philosophy, the subtle thought, the affluent diction, the soaring genius of classic and heroic ages. The rupture between Henry VIII. and the Pope authorized and stimulated human speculation, and men were not slow to im-

prove the occasion with the means which were at hand. The century which followed was crowded and heated with questions, projects and controversies. All things pertaining to life and godliness were discussed, not only with appreciation, but with the zest of an immediate personal interest. Government, morals and religion, State, Church and Scripture were thrown open to the general public for an inspection and a handling as severe as it was universal. Every one practiced his casuistry, propounded his dogma, claimed his right. Most of the problems which arose had now been solved, or their elements and conditions ascertained; yet for want of unification and adjustment, the times remained sadly out of joint. Then arose the Long Parliament, the parliament of liberty and progress, and found their mission to be precisely that of combining these several problems into one general system of constitutional administration in church and state which should be at once stable, beneficent and popular. There was no average probability that their work would be other than wise and enduring.

2. The Westminster Assembly was convened by this Parliament to aid them in their work. To this Assembly, as a body of experts in matters Biblical and Ecclesiastical, it was referred to digest from the word of God a scheme of Faith and Order for the Church of Christ. It is safe and it is easy to speak in exalted praise of this body. Those who knew most accurately the learning and the piety of its members; those who were nearest to it in point of time, and even those who, on political or ecclesiastical grounds, were opposed to the work of the Assembly, have yet agreed with its admirers and partisans in their appreciation of the Assembly itself. They have taught us to regard it as "a learned and memorable Synod, * * in which piety, learning and prudence were housed," (Milton); have pronounced that "the divines there congregated were men of eminent learning, godliness, ministerial ability and fidelity; the Christian world, since the days of the Apostles, had never a Synod of more excellent divines," (Baxter): that "the Westminster divines had learning—Scriptural, patristic, scholastic and modern—enough and to spare: all solid, substantial and ready for use. Moreover, in the perception and advocacy of what is most characteristic and fundamental in the gospel of

Jesus Christ, they were as a body considerably in advance of some who could put in a claim to equal and perhaps higher scholarship, (Stoughton): that, "whether we look at the extent or ability of its labors, or its influence upon future generations, it stands **FIRST AMONG PROTESTANT COUNCILS.**"* Who would not rejoice were the formulation of Creeds and Confessions always committed to such a body as this? But a still further presumption in favor of the Westminster Assembly arises, if we consider the truly representative character of that body. It was constituted from all ranks and all parties. It included clergymen and laymen, Presbyterians and Independents, Episcopalians and Erastians. These, coming together much like the broken stones on a Macadam road, were found to lose their angularities and their mutual repellancies in the attrition of debate, and to settle down into an unanimity as solid as it was marvellous. The years which they spent together in the study of the Holy Scriptures, with the solemn pledge which they gave each other every Monday morning, † produced the result which might have been anticipated—they became "of one accord, of one mind." The source and the bitterness of religious controversy are to be found in this, that men do not come together in mutual confidence and in the honest inquiry, **What saith the Scripture?**

Still further in this direction, the aim of the Westminster Assembly, as instructed by Parliament, was to furnish a Formula of Christian faith and worship which should be adapted and acceptable to the entire British realm—the three kingdoms and the colonies. This catholic aim must have continually enlarged their view, smoothed their asperities, toned down their dogmatism as far as fidelity to truth and Scripture would admit. The aim was never fully accomplished, but the good effects of the effort are patent in all the work. The Parliament may have been visionary in hoping to enact this uniformity and maintain it by law, but the Westminster divines were not visionary in

* Schaff's Creeds of Christendom, vol. I., p. 728.

† This pledge was as follows: "I do seriously promise and vow, in the presence of Almighty God, that in this Assembly, whereof I am a member, I will maintain nothing in point of doctrine but what I believe to be most agreeable to the word of God; nor in point of discipline but what may make most for God's glory and the peace and good of His church."

providing for it. A scheme of religion may be deduced, and it is our faith that it will be deduced from Scripture, which shall be adapted to men of all nations. The world of believers shall yet "walk by the same rule," shall "mind the same thing," shall confess "one Lord, one faith, one baptism."

But the point made by these historic allusions is this: The century which eventuated in the noble British commonwealth; the competency, honesty and earnestness of the members of the Westminster Assembly; the representative character of that body, and the unanimity with which they reached their conclusions, are presumptions largely in favor of the scriptural truth and the practical value of the standards of doctrine and order which we have inherited from them.

II.

But these presumptions are more than realized in the content and the structure of the Westminster system of Theology. An impressive solidity reigns throughout. An impervious logic binds all the parts in reciprocal relations. The parts are complete, each in itself, yet by correlation and interdependence the system is a unit. It is a complete whole. Its list of topics is full. No head in divinity, no doctrine, duty or privilege, no relationship nor institution set forth in Scripture, in terms or by inference, as part of God's revealed will fails of its place. Its statements are firm, dignified and comprehensive. Its definitions are ample and clear beyond those of any other religious formulary, Romish or Protestant. Its order is natural; its proportions befitting.

It has been objected that this Theology is too metaphysical, too cold, too severe. This criticism is urged by its enemies, and too often conceded by its friends. In reply, let us here draw a much needed distinction. There is a confession, or, more properly, a creed, which is personal. Its characteristic is appropriation—as when Thomas exclaimed, "My Lord and my God!" Its object is to voice the protestation of faith. Its value is as a token and a measure of religious experience. It must indicate that the heart of the confessor is the subject of a gracious renewal. It is a condition of communion and fellowship in the Christian church. So Philip, the Evangelist, said to the Eunuch, "If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest" (be bap-

tized). "And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; * * * and he baptized him." And there is a confession which is not so much personal as public; not individual but aggregate and representative. Its object is to embody the testimony of the church. Its value is as a measure of the church's zeal, fidelity, and knowledge of the oracles of God. It is the condition of church unity, peace and power. Both these confessions call for intelligence, earnestness and sincerity, but otherwise they differ widely. The former may be ardent and loving, for it is the believer's *cardiphonia*; the latter should be serious and careful, for it must evince that the witness-bearing church is competent to declare *all the counsel of God*.

Now the Westminster standards are not a creed, but a confession of Faith. They are not conditions of communion, but summary statements of the teachings of Scripture. And thereupon we assert,

1. That they are not metaphysical. They are abstruse, as all Revelation must be—containing things and uses unknown to mere sense and nature, "in which are some things hard to be understood." But the speculative niceties, the logical refinements which are the characteristics of metaphysics, are not found in them. And when we remember that metaphysics was for ages and to the best minds in the place of Theology, the non-committalism of these formularies to those schools and those abstractions is something wonderful. The world had been widely convulsed with metaphysical controversies, the ground-swell of which was even yet round about the Westminster Assembly, yet their work shows no fossil marks of the falling rain, no slant of the driving wind. It is not of Plato, Aristotle or Zeno. They do not lean to Nominalism, Realism, or Conceptualism. And all this is presumptive of their being true to "the wisdom that is from above.

2. That this Theology of Westminster is not cold. It is simply calm and self-poised, as a science should be. True, it does not gush with sentiment; but neither does your Physiology, which is the science of life; and neither does your Psychology, which is the science of emotional nature. Theology is the science of Religion. Religion is indeed emotional, but emotion is not re-

ligion. Theology is not intended to exhibit, nor primarily to awaken emotion, but it does not chill ardor, does not repress sentiment, does not forbid strong, tender feeling—in a word, is not cold. And being public, not private nor personal, being the voice of the church interpreting Scripture, not the breathings of the believer interpreting the grace which is working in his heart, it ought not to be marked by purely personal traits. The objection is wholly out of place.

3. The severity which is supposed to characterize this system is found in its Calvinism—concerning which I remark, (1) Calvinism was the Reformation. It voiced the faith, it gave the martyrs. The great system which has ever been named as its rival and opponent—since called Arminianism—was and remained in the church of Rome. (2) In every age the philosophy and moral principles which have most resembled Calvinism have developed man's noblest characteristics, Purity, Firmness, Conscientiousness. (3) As I have heretofore said, upon another occasion, "the theology of Calvinism reveals a glorious Being, whose august personal character adorns the excellent greatness of His high office; so that His people, in their knowledge of Him, are willing in the day of His power; and of all that is high in His word, and of all that is mysterious or seemingly severe in His administration they say, It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth to Him good! Its view of man takes in all the facts of his condition with all the principles of his constitution. Its way of salvation is redolent of atoning merit, as well as radiant with the Saviour's example and endeared by the Saviour's sympathy. Strength and beauty are in its sanctuary—the strength of a gracious sovereignty, the beauty of a perfect righteousness."* (4) Calvinism is the essential element in all prayer. (5) This is the only system of revealed religion which renders it logically certain that a single human being will ever be saved. This is not severity, but strength. The only severity in this scheme is as against error and sin, against rebellion and unbelief.

But whatever may be objected to this our Westminster Theology, I have this night in your presence subscribed it with my name, in renewed token of my confidence in it as the truth of

* Dedication Address N. W. Theol. Sem. Chicago, 1876.

God. Objections honestly made will, I am assured, prove to be misapprehensions.

III.

It is to be remarked that Theology—using the word in its general sense as Formulated Religion—is a moulding force in the world, the mightiest and the most universal known to man. This is shown by the simplest analysis. Theology, in its revelation of God, presents the largest life, the mightiest power, the ideal of character, the sources and the elements of destiny, all in most immediate relations of favor or of disfavor to the human soul; and to this ideal the soul hastens to conform itself in its own traits, pursuits, relationships and institutions. Thus in concrete forms, personal, social and public, men show their Theology. In their individual traits, in their families, in their civil (or their savage) governments, they declare the god whom they worship. And this is illustrated in facts of daily observation. The heathen temple, with its vile and bloody worship, is but a kind of incarnation of the unclean devils which are recognized as gods among the heathen. The peculiarities of Popery may be read in the symbolism of that worship; in the altar, the censer, the confessional, the tonsure, the robes, the rites; and the Reformation is both proclaimed and illustrated in the simple forms of Protestantism—in the pulpit, the communion table, the Bible, the Hymn Book. The worship more or less reproduces the creed; not by the sleight of men and their cunning craftiness, but according to the constitution and the normal working of human nature.

The Westminster Confession closed and completed the Reformation. It gave the results of the latest, the fullest, the ablest examination of all scriptural and other reasons for either faith or forms. And now “the form of sound words” which they have bequeathed to us may well be held fast. It has been proven to be sound. Its claims have been substantiated by abundant investigation and discussion. The reasons, scriptural, philosophical, historical and practical, which prevailed for their adoption in the Westminster Assembly would probably prevail in any such assembly.

Presumably, then, the Westminster Theology is the best Theology, and therefore the best of the moulding forces which are

at work upon human character and human—especially religious—institutions. The Presbyterian church (or family of churches) is the concrete form, the embodiment of this Theology; and it is due to our church that these great standards of doctrine and order be deeply, thoroughly studied. Her ministry are the guardians and the champions of these, and they cannot be too intelligent as to their letter, spirit and divine warrant. They can not understand too clearly that the very law of the church's life is in her Confession of Faith; and that all ministrations which undervalue the Confession, or which ignore it as obsolete, and all attempts to tamper with it, involve very grave responsibility. They should be able to give a valid reason for their adherence to the Confession, and upon a change of views respecting it should, in simple honesty, announce such change and thereupon retire from her ministry. Honesty, I say, in every proper sense of the word. Honesty with one's self in not holding, and honesty with the world in not advocating an opinion in morals or religion, except it be a matter of faith and of logical conviction. Honesty, too, with the church, in not accepting salary for her service when such service does not include the defence of her Confession, and when it is not rendered with the heart. For want of a clear conception of the relations of the Confession to the church, on the one hand, and to conscience on the other, a certain form of lax morality obtains. Men find it convenient and find themselves willing to change their church at pleasure without changing their creed, or to change their creed at pleasure without changing their church. A supposed advance in thought among those who are learned in earthly science; a new drift in popular sentiment; a new class of interests, brilliant and opportune, is allowed to be a sufficient plea in justification of such change of creed or of church. For who can afford to lose the fellowship, the professional regard of the learned—and who can risk an open collision with the public—and who can be indifferent to his own interests? But with more thorough study of the Confession we may hope to effect an improved ethics of subscription. The elastic morals to which I have alluded may give place to a more serious conscientiousness. We shall have fewer Vicars of Bray, and more frequent reproductions of "Athanasius against the world."

The forms, too, for the public ministrations of religion, which we have received deserve to be maintained. They are few, simple and flexible; and are not wanting in dignity, significance, or a proper measure of impressiveness. Being a Directory and not a Liturgy, opportunity is left for the culture of gifts, and for the exercise of discretion and taste as to order and proportion upon different occasions. Underlying the whole is the Theology of Christ's finished work, His abiding high priesthood and His covenant relations with His people; of the Holy Spirit's mission and work; of the general priesthood of believers and the church's position of dignity and privilege as espoused to her Lord. These truths, rightly understood, banish from the Christian church the altar, the priest, the symbolism of robe, gesture and posture, and regulate as to manner and form the prayer, the praise, the sermon and the sacraments. A thorough mastery of our Westminster Theology will, no doubt, contribute to a consistent uniformity in our public worship. It would seem that not every Presbyterian and not every Presbyterian minister knows the fine scriptural significance of our standing posture in public prayer, or the historic sense and solemnity of the Doxology. Oftentimes, indeed, it is difficult to recognize the Presbyterian congregation in their diversity—not to say confusion—of forms.

The Presbyterian church, and everything Presbyterian deserves well at our hands. The Presbyterian chapter in American history, which furnishes head and body to so many other chapters, and the Presbyterian imprint on human character, such I have already mentioned, are alike worthy of admiration and gratitude. Everything distinctive in this most beneficent system should be dear to every lover of his country, every lover of his kind, every lover of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The general CHURCH OF GOD deserves well at our hands. It has abundant *reason to be*. Founded upon and distinguished by the general scheme of revealed truth—the same Theology for substance—it is the fountain for civilization, the conservator of all learning and all art, teacher and exemplar of all charity. In whatever benefits or blesses man Jerusalem is “the mother of us all.” The proper study of Theology will renew church life,

and will deepen in the heart of her sons an intelligent filial love and zeal.

IV.

I have high estimates of Theology as a science. It is entitled to the name of science. It is certainly not like such products of human genius as Heraldry, where the substances are imaginary and the relations purely arbitrary; nor like Phrenology, in which, though the substances are real, the relations are fanciful and the logic unsound. It fulfils any true and just definition of science, taking cognizance of real subsistences, actual relationships, historic facts; with logical processes and practical results. It is a discussion of the great things of the universe and of eternity—such personages as God, angels and men; such substances as mind and matter; such facts as creation, ruin, redemption, retribution; such conditions as personality, freedom, responsibility; such relations as justification, adoption, and their opposites. It is the largest of all the sciences, appropriating to itself the methods of all the others, yet strengthening, conserving and adorning all that it appropriates. It affiliates with other sciences as a sister; it reigns over them as a queen. So lofty is its seat and so wide is its sway that several entire sciences, whose extent and importance are universally confessed, are but provinces in its domain—but introductions to its study. The sciences of mind and of human knowledge; of causation; of language and its capabilities; of law and its administration; of logic and of ethics, it subordinates to itself, it implicates with its own processes and results. As in the case of all sciences, the study of it is a discipline, a general culture of the mind; while experimental religion, which is but the application of it, is an art possible to all, fine as æsthetics, sweet as love, deep as the seat of character, lasting as immortality.

Theology may therefore well afford to be confident in her dogmatics. A science in itself, and entrenched, as we have seen, amid the sciences, no attack can be made upon her which is not easily shown to be unscientific, and which does not end in a ruinous recoil. The argument which discredits her sacred writings, as to their genuineness, authenticity or interpretation, would reduce all literature to fictions, and endanger the sense and the use of all documents and of all language. That which

attacks her salvation, in which "righteousness and peace have kissed each other," that is to say, in which law is made compatible with leniency, in which justice and grace are safely and harmoniously blended, shakes the foundation of all law, of all government, of all morals. That which denies God is found to be logically a denial of all common sense—taking away the foundation and the possibility of all knowledge.

Upon merely rational grounds, therefore, Theology deserves to be appreciated and respected as are any, the noblest, products of the human understanding; and to be taught and studied with the drill and care which alone insure the mastery of any science, in its theory or its applications.

V.

Theology is to be viewed as wholly Biblical. A certain knowledge of God may indeed be derived from the works of nature, "even His eternal power and Godhead;" but even this needs to be both verified and supplemented by Revelation—otherwise, the ends and uses of a knowledge of God by man must forever remain without accomplishment. Nature does not indicate God's name, nor government, nor grace. It binds the conscience and rules the life by no moral law; it redeems from sin and from wrath by no precious gospel; it renews and cleanses by no new-creating, indwelling Spirit of Holiness. In the Scriptures alone do we find these great indispensable things set forth originally and completely. Theology is the systematized interpretation of Scripture. Ordinary science is the systematized interpretation of nature. Science does not create gravitation, nor attraction, nor affinity—nor the substances in which these inhere—nor the great all-compelling force of which these are manifestations. Nature is a great assumed, pre-existing reality. Science plies nature with her catechism, and these are her answers. Science approaches nature with her varied Organon, her induction and deduction, her analysis and synthesis, and volume after volume is unrolled of the Creator's mighty thought and plan in nature. What were nature without science? It were a sealed book, a world without art or invention, without variety or extent of use, or any other than wild beauty.

Revelation, too, is a world, vast, varied and full, even as nature is a world. It has its substances, its forces, its laws, and

these are dimly parabled in those of nature. Its "righteousness is like the great mountains," its "judgments are a great deep." If common science can give to man the power and the poetry of the mountains, of the oceans—aye, and of the "stars, which are the poetry of heaven," even so comes forth Theology from the world of Revelation to give to man the power, the poetry, the joy, the hope, the glory of the new, the eternal life. Its function is not to create doctrines, any more than it is the function of natural science to create force or phenomena. It is simply the minister and interpreter of Scripture. Any interpretation of Scripture must be theological; a full and systematized interpretation is Theology.

VI.

Theology is the science which connects with personal religion and the salvation of souls. It is derived from Scripture with express reference to this end. All its content and structure show both design and adaptation to promote piety. The same is seen in its vital relations to the church, to which I have already adverted. To foster sectarianism, to furnish shibboleths for parties in religion, to intensify the bitterness of party spirit are miserable perversions, hateful abuses of Theology. It is meant to make channels in the heart in which the waters of grace may flow in wise and effective irrigation. It is intended to distil through the sermon what will inform the understanding and win the heart. If it is theoretical, it is that religion may be intelligently and consistently practical. If it is calm, it is that piety may be clear. If it be exclusive of error, it is not therefore harsh or heartless to man. On the contrary, it is Theology which defines the warrant for Christian hope, which formulates the believer's prayer, and which opens the way to the communion table. It is important to remark that piety is theological even as life is physical. Theology can not originate piety, as neither can physiology originate life. But as physiology is employed concerning life from its very germ onwards, so Theology is the true norm of spiritual life, its diet and regimen, so to speak, onward to its consummation. Every grace in the heart, every religious feeling is traceable to and is explicable by some truth of Scripture, or is spurious. It follows from this that every believer has in Theology the means of self-examination,

the means of intelligent confidence and joy in his own experience. He has in it also the means of usefulness, by being able to explain scientifically this religious experience to others. The piety which is not theological is not reliable nor explicable. It is not proof against temptation, nor against heresy. It is frothy, inconstant, narrow. It is to Theology—that is to say, to doctrinal preaching—that we must look for a sober, strong, manly piety. And until this be realized the church will be exposed to the distractions of enthusiasm, fanaticism and superstitious imposture.

These, Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Board of Directors, are some of the serious and appreciative estimates which I entertain of Theology, its position and relations, and of the work to which, in conjunction with my brethren of the Faculty, you have called me. “Who is sufficient for these things?” Truly our sufficiency, whatever it may be, is of God!

Danville Theological Seminary.

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For Catalogues, or for additional information, address the undersigned or any other member of the Faculty.

STEPHEN YERKES,

Chairman of Faculty.