

INAUGURAL ADDRESSES

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## INTRODUCTION.

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# INAUGURAL ADDRESS

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WILLIS LORD, D. D.,

PROFESSOR OF BIBLICAL AND ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.

(39)

## INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF WILLIS LORD.

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FATHERS AND BRETHREN—It is a great and sacred work to train Pastors and Teachers for the Church of God. When I think how great and sacred, I marvel that any part in it should have been committed to me. Certainly, I did not seek it. Neither did I desire it. I had not a thought even, in reference to it, as a personal matter. Had I known beforehand of any purpose to put this work upon me, I should have shunned it. I undertake it now from a deep sense of duty; because, by various and clear indications it seems to be the will of God.

In founding this new School of the Prophets, and arranging its offices of instruction, it pleased the venerable Assembly of the Church to place me in the chair of *Biblical and Ecclesiastical History*. The general subject, therefore, of the present Address is not optional. It is determined by the nature of the duties I am called to perform, and by this solemn service of inauguration.

History, in its simplest form, is the record of events or facts. Indeed, in every form, these must constitute its essential matter—its warp and woof. Theories, however ingenious, and speculations, however brilliant or profound, are of little worth, without a basis of clear and solid truth. But, neither

do isolated, and indigested facts meet our wants. In order to utility, there must be method and classification.

History assumes a scientific character and aspect, when its facts are presented in due order, and a pervading intelligence exhibits their causes, relations, and results. It becomes then not only interesting, but also instructive. Yesterday is the monitor and teacher of to-day. The Past imparts the treasures of its experience and wisdom, for the use and benefit of the Present. Each successive age transmits its accumulated and various wealth to the ages coming.

But a higher view enters into the right conception of History, and is necessary to its completeness. In the course and conflict of earthly and heavenly things, above human means and ends, are the divine; above every created actor, is God. His presence pervades all space. His power controls all being. His purposes embrace all events. His eternal providence presides over insects and angels, invisible atoms and immeasurable worlds. It is the dictate of reason, as well as the averment of the Bible. Philosophy requires that it should be so, equally with Faith. The most unimportant page, therefore, in even secular annals, cannot be read in its true light, or understood in its full import, apart from the plan and purpose of Him, who "hath prepared his throne in the heavens," and "whose kingdom ruleth over all." History, without God, is chaos.

Biblical History has its name, not from its subject, but from its source. It does not treat of the Bible, its language, text, manuscripts, versions, criticism, or the laws of its interpretation, except incidentally; but, it is recorded in it, and is drawn from it. With the truth and power of the divine pen, it presents, as its central and main theme, the Apostasy and the Redemption, the People and Kingdom of God, their beginning, character, course, trials, and triumphs; interweaving with this distinctive and pervading element, those collateral and subsidiary matters which result from the inevitable contact and implication of

sacred with secular things. Its starting point is the Creation. In that, the work of God is perfect. It narrates then the Temptation and the Fall. In these, the perfect work of God is destroyed. But amidst this dread ruin, it reveals the presence of One who is greater than Satan. It is His purpose to redeem and restore. Grace, therefore, mingles with justice, and invests the divine government with new and wondrous features. It bestows upon Man, what is withheld from Angels. Among the very desolations of Eden, there is the promise of a Deliverer. That promise awakens hope and joy in Adam. It is the germ of all subsequent revelation, the ground of all subsequent spiritual life, power, and achievement. It wrought the faith of Abel, the translation of Enoch, the righteousness of Noah. That dispensation closed, indeed, with a terrific judgment; but the Church survived the Deluge. Faith rebuilt its altar on Ararat, linking thus the world that was, with the world that is; and thence began new and distincter manifestations of the plan of God in Redemption. We see them in the Confusion of Tongues and the Dispersion of Mankind; in the Call of Abraham and the Covenant with him and his Seed; in the Oppression and the Wonders in Egypt; in the Discipline of the Wilderness; in the Institutions of the Law; the Conquest of Canaan, the Government of the Judges and Kings, the Captivity in Babylon, and in the whole course and condition of the chosen people, until the succession of the Prophets and the Spirit of Inspiration ceased with Malachi. Through all this period, and amidst whatever changes, in the light of Biblical History, we trace the divine purpose, not only in unbroken continuity, but also in constant progress towards that stupendous consummation, with which the Ages were in travail, God in Bethlehem! God on Calvary!

Ecclesiastical History differs from Biblical in this—that while its subject is sacred, its sources are human. It treats indeed of the Church of God; but its witnesses and writers are men. It traverses too a later period in the course of time.

It begins where the inspired page is about to end. With the exception of the Acts of the Apostles—whose historical value is immense—and a few incidental passages in the Apostolic letters, it depends wholly on records and monuments, made by successive generations since the beloved John died. Its main features however are authentic; its great facts, certain. On the closure of the Old Economy, the Church is a “little flock.” But the gospel is preached, the Spirit is given, and converts are multiplied. The scenes of Pentecost continue. People and priests become obedient to the faith. Gentiles as well as Jews are gathered in; Cornelius as well as Saul. Success awakens hostility. Judaism arrays its forces. Paganism is roused to resistance. Persecution kindles its fire, and whets its sword. Heresy begins its invasion. Who can fittingly describe the conflict? Who can duly estimate its surpassing moment? But truth is mightier than error. God is stronger than men. In three centuries the Church triumphs. The Emperor of the world becomes the servant of Jesus Christ. Then follow the perils of prosperity. Then are made, by gradual steps, those wider and bolder departures from the primitive form and faith, which, at length, result in the claim of the harlot to be the bride of Christ, and in the casting out of his true wedded wife, to seek for refuge among the crags of the mountains and in the dens of the desert. And yet, the Church was not then extinct, nor did the promise of God fail. Through all those mournful ages, the pure stream of truth flowed on, the succession of faithful witnesses was maintained, real piety lived and flourished, sometimes even beneath cowls and in monasteries, as well as among those who utterly abjured them both. It was an English priest, who first gave the people the New Testament, in their own mother tongue. It was a German monk whom God mainly used in that mighty upheaval of the sixteenth century, which we call the Reformation, that glorious work of demolition and reconstruction which restored to such an extent the Apostolic faith and Church, and whose beneficent



influences pervading the nations, have roused and sharpened their mental and moral life, stimulated invention, agriculture, commerce, and the arts, and made our age pre-eminently the age of civil and religious liberty and power.

But from this general view, suggested thus by the terms which designate our office and work, let us turn to some particulars concerning the Church, in which history instructs us, and which may serve as specimens, to show the interest and importance of its study, especially to those who would minister in the Sanctuary, and guide the hosts of God along their way to victory and heaven.

History discloses the Divine origin of the Church. It is not of men, but of God. We might perhaps have argued this from its manifest character and end as compared with any human institution; but we have the explicit record. God devised and created it. Its ground and charter were germinally in that first promise. It became real and visible in the trusting and active faith of Abel, perhaps of Adam. That promise was the blossom of God's grace; that faith awoke and put on its marvellous strength and beauty, at God's secret call, and because of God's internal and efficacious work. As signally then, as in any instance of Divine life since, was it true—"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." The Church so begun, was continued by the accession of others, through the working of the same grace, and the manifestation of a like faith. All the saints before the flood, whether numerous or few, and whatever the form of their association or the order of their worship, were the fold, the family, the house, the Church of God.

When after that memorable event, a new and clearer development of the Divine purpose, as touching the Church, was to be made, God was still present. The call of Abraham was a Divine call. The covenant with him and his seed was a Divine covenant. The promises, which within that covenant were as living fountains of strength and refreshment to many gene-

rations, were Divine promises. Moses, the great legislator of the Church, was the servant of God. Elijah, the stern reformer of the Church, came in the strength of God. David, the sweet psalmist of the Church, sung by the Spirit of God. Isaiah, and all the holy Prophets of the Church, spoke in the name of God. And of the Church of that dispensation, though indeed belonging essentially to all dispensations, it was, that God himself said, "This is my rest forever, here will I dwell."

And still later, when at length the legal and typical economy passed away, because He had come who was the substance of all types, and the perfect fulfiller of the Law, and when therefore the form and order of the Church were to be further and materially changed, it was at the command, or by the graciously present Spirit, of its glorious Head. The commission of the Apostles was a Divine commission. The truths they preached were Divine truths. The laws they enacted were Divine laws. The powers, by which they vindicated their claims and wrought conviction and obedience among Gentiles and Jews, were Divine powers. And as the narrative of their work and teaching flows on, the pregnant phrase continually recurs, "the Church of God," "the Church of God," implying not only his presence in it, and his jurisdiction over it, but also its origin and its continued life in him and by him. And then, when the sacred word is about to close, and the Church, the Bride, the Lamb's wife, passes before the vision of the entranced Prophet, symbolized by a city of great extent and ineffable beauty and glory, that city comes down out of heaven, and is the City of God.

God then devised and created the Church. He laid its foundation, and will rear its pinnacles. And he devised it and brought it into visible existence and operation, not only as the school and home where he might best train his children for their work on earth and their rest in heaven, but also as the chief instrument of his wisdom and power in combating sin and destroying the works of the devil. Its characteristic idea is that of a selection out of, and a separation from, the

earthly and corrupt mass; to be indeed a heavenly society, but to be also a heavenly power, re-acting on that mass, and pervading and transforming it to such extent as God wills; and whether in the one view or the other, there is no device or creation of men like it. Those restless or ambitious spirits who seek to cast out Satan and renew the social and moral world, by antagonistic or even independent means, betray as profound folly as they do irreverence. They labour in vain and spend their strength for naught. It is not indeed the mere organism which quickens and regenerates, but it is the ever-living and Almighty Spirit, who dwells in that organism and works by it. The Church is the device of Divine wisdom, the depository of Divine truth, the channel of Divine grace, the implement of Divine power, the earthly abode of the Divine presence. To the Church pertain "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." This is her exclusive distinction. It is the living source of her efficiency. "What shall one then answer the messengers of the nation? That the Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust in it." In the sense of the ancient symbol, "I believe in the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Catholic Church."

History further attests the constant and firm faith of the Church. The Church has a faith. She is no creedless thing. In every age, and with deep emphasis, she has said, I believe. And to instruct and confirm her children, at every now and then, she has drawn out her sense of Scripture, that only perfect and infallible rule, in clear and logical compends, or well considered Confessions; but whether in that or these, it is "one faith;" it is "the faith of God's elect;" it is "the faith delivered" by God whose Oracles they are. And observe that apostolic word. It discriminates and so instructs. Not invented by Philosophy. Not discovered by Science. Not elaborated by any process or power of the human mind, but

“delivered” from above. Indeed how else could it be? A Divine faith necessitates a Divine revelation. In such a matter, Nature is deficient, human wit and reason fail. There must be the supernatural. Its entire absence from the faith and history of the Church, would prove them not Divine. In the face then of all current atheism, vulgar and refined, we avow and exult in this that, as a system of truth as well as a spiritual experience, our “faith stands, not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”

It is interesting to notice how soon this faith began to be “delivered;” how early the Church had it; not indeed, in abstract and scientific statements, but in the concrete, in living and speaking facts. Turn to the pages of Genesis. Is there a God, do you ask? Men reason. They infer causes from effects, and thus reach the First Cause. The Bible does not reason, it declares, “God created the heavens and the earth.” Is there an Almighty Spirit? Men hesitate. They consult analogies. Our being is complex. Perhaps God’s being is so. The Bible neither consults nor hesitates, it again declares, “The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” Is there a Trinity in the Godhead? How profound the silence which seals mortal lips! And yet that supreme mystery is at least intimated when the narrative adds, “Elohim said, Let us make man in our image.” Is sin in question—its fact or its relation? Read that story of the fall, and that sentence on our trembling parents. How certain their guilt! how wide and disastrous its reach! Is there a Redeemer? Hearken, thou who art lost! “The Seed of the woman shall bruise the Serpent’s head.” Not at once, indeed, is understood the full import of these prophetic and assuring words, but there is light in them and eternal life. Is salvation by faith? Come with me to that altar where Abel worships. Hear him as he cries, “O Lamb of God, through thy precious blood, prefigured by the blood of this lamb, save me!” Does God choose whom he will to be the heirs of his grace? Mark yonder heroic exile

from among the idolaters of Chaldea. He alone is called of God, and becomes the Father of the faithful. Will God preserve the real Christian and the true Church amidst whatever perils? See that wondrous sight on Horeb, the symbolic bush, burning, yet unconsumed. Will the dead live again? Behold the sacrifice on Moriah. The Patriarch binds the beloved victim, and prepares the fatal blow, "accounting that God is able to raise him up, even from the dead!" Is there a Judgment to come? How clear and startling is this voice from Enoch, "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all!"

In this manner, God, from the beginning, "delivered" the faith, not to the philosophers, but "the saints;" not to the Academy, but the Church. The Church with reverence received it, with affection preserved it, with fidelity transmitted it. It gathered precision and fulness, by time. So God wisely purposed. What at first was obscure became gradually clearer. What was imperfect was made more and more complete. In its initial stage, it spread saving knowledge through the antediluvian period. With still stronger rays, it shone on the tents and hallowed the altars of the Patriarchs. In the significant forms and ceremonies of the law, it had a distincter and more impressive exhibition. The pages of the Prophets glow with its splendor, and almost anticipate the completed revelations of the gospel. With new elements of light and power, it passes over into the records and the Church of the New Testament, being witnessed through Evangelists and Apostles, by the Holy Ghost; and it remains to-day in the original documents most wonderfully preserved, and in venerable symbols, like those of Dort and Westminster, the sacred and priceless possession of the household of God.

There have been indeed sad departures from the faith; there have been multiplied corruptions of it, by individuals and by sects. All history is defiled with, and groans under, the deposits of error. And yet from this sore evil God has educa

good. Error has been the means of defining the truth more clearly, of eliminating from it all foreign mixtures, of bringing it out in bolder relief, and throwing around it ampler and impregnable defences. That memorable misconception of the gift of God by Simon Magus prompted the equally memorable rebuke and correction of it by Simon Peter. Judaizing attempts on the one hand, and philosophical pretensions on the other, gave greater point and power to the preaching and letters of Paul. The ambition of Diotrephes and the impiety of Cerinthus redoubled the pleas for humility in Christians, and the proofs of Godhead in Christ, from the lips and the pen of John. The advancing shadow of Gnosticism impelled both these great Apostles to contend more earnestly for that *gnosis* which alone is real and true. The slanderous assaults of the Pagan adversaries, called forth the noble defences of the early Christian Apologists. Arianism aroused the uncompromising orthodoxy of Athanasius. The Pelagian heresy gave rise to the profound and masterly vindications and expositions of Augustine. The culmination of the errors and abuses of the Papacy under Leo, brought on, by an almost inevitable reaction, the Reformation under Luther. And to instance now no further, the plausible but impious Naturalism of the present, insinuating itself through Magazines and desecrating even Pulpits, is filling the true sons of God with a deeper love and holier ardour for the long tried and imperishable faith of the Church.

And in its faithful record of error, in giving its genesis and development, its forms and fruits, how great a boon does History confer! What an illustration too that "there is nothing new under the sun!" The human mind seems to move in a circle. It seems especially to run the round of its deviations from truth, in stated periods; and then to repeat the revolution. The multiplied isms of to-day, however novel they may seem, are not new truths, but old falsehoods. They lived in the same or kindred forms, bore their proper fruit, died and were buried perhaps centuries ago. And those vain men who

father them, and would fain be thought original or profound thinkers because of them, have no such merit at all. They have simply been opening some ancient graves, and evoking the dead, presently to die again. Is it Humanitarianism, or Transcendentalism, or Pantheism, or Formalism, or Spiritualism, or Anti-Scripturism of any sort? To History it is an old acquaintance. Somewhere in its course along the ages, History has seen it before. History knows its character and pedigree. History exposes and refutes its pretensions. History bids men beware of its influence and to remand it with due promptness to its forsaken sepulchre. Truth alone is instinct with immortal life and beauty.

History, moreover, brings us into contact and sympathy with the great Teachers of the Church. Ignorance is not the mother of devotion. An intelligent piety will be more apt to be both spiritual and efficient. The material creation began with light. It is no less the case when God begins the new creation of a soul in Christ. What begins in light, as the very condition and means of its existence, cannot be expected to thrive in darkness. It were a reversing of primary law, and of nature itself. The evangelic command therefore is, Grow in knowledge as well as grace. It presses on the individual Christian, and on the collective body of believers. How else can the Church realize the Divine purpose as to its own character, or become God's great Institute of instruction to the world? And yet this is her mission. "Go ye therefore," said Jesus as he left his cross for his throne, "and teach all nations." And he added thus no new function to the Church, but only enlarged the sphere of her operation.

The supreme Teacher was Jesus Christ, aforetime as the Angel of the Covenant, under various Divine appearances; in these last days as the seed of the woman, in the form of a servant; and both then and now, by his Spirit also, as well as in person. The Prophets were his ministers and bore his messages. The Apostles sat at his feet, and taught only in his

name. How admirable, hence, the historical skill and legislative wisdom of Moses! How rich and various the spiritual treasures of Asaph and David! How grand and stirring the predictive strains of Isaiah and his gifted associates! How beautiful, too, for simplicity are the Gospels! How earnest and practical the exhortations of Peter! How glowing and resistless the arguments of Paul! How childlike and yet profound the sentences of John! And when you gather into one the writings of Apostles and Prophets, the teaching of Christ in his own person, and the teaching of Christ by his inspired servants, what other volume is like it? How vast and perfect its truth! How incomparable its wisdom and power!

In passing from the Scriptures to the Fathers, we do indeed make a long descent; we leave the Divine and consciously enter the human. The difference between them is so palpable and great, as to afford itself an impressive argument for the supernatural source of the Bible. And yet, in the Fathers, there are grains of fine wheat, and particles of pure gold. Clemens, Ignatius, Polycarp, and Justin Martyr, yield now and then a sentence or thought not unworthy of preservation. We find a higher order of intellect, as well as a wider reach of attainment, in the philosophical Clement of Alexandria, the profoundly erudite but fanciful Origen, and the fervid and imaginative Tertullian. They were the master spirits of their age. Then follow the churchly Cyprian, who, notwithstanding, loved Christ, and won a martyr's crown; the oratorical Lactantius, who has been called the Christian Cicero; the bold and intense Athanasius, whose watch cry in the Arian conflict was, "Earth has no Saviour, if its Saviour be not God;" Ambrose also, in the West, whom Milman characterizes as "the spiritual ancestor of the Hildebrands and Innocents;" and Basil and the Gregories, in the East, who, with some grave blemishes, belonging rather to the times than the men, united some eminent merits, which have been the admiration of all times. Still superior to these was Jerome, the great Scholar of the Church,



whom Niebuhr calls a "giant," and describes his works, excepting the critical, as disclosing "animation, elasticity of mind, learning to an immense extent, and wit, which continues till his old age, and constitutes the predominant feature of his character;" the golden-mouthed Chrysostom, the great Preacher of the Church, whose marvellous eloquence, usually grounded on evangelic truth, swayed the vast assemblies of Antioch and Constantinople as the wind does the forests, and around whose memory a charm and fragrance linger, which fifteen centuries have not been able to dispel; and Augustine, the great Theologian of the Church, of a prodigious grasp of intellect, "in whom, Paul lived again;" whom Luther thought "the ablest and purest of all the Doctors;" whom even Dr. Pusey recommends as "one in whom the stream of Catholic truth flowed strong and deep," although predestinarian sticks and straws do sometimes intermingle, and whose influence on his own and all subsequent ages, as touching Theology, has doubtless been greater than that of any other uninspired man.

But I must desist from even these glances, and wholly passing mediæval times and mediæval men, (some of whom were truly great, as Anselm and Bernard,) be content, in reference to the later teachers of the Church, just to mention the impetuous zeal of Luther, the gentle strength of Melancthon, the invincible logic of Calvin, the stern intrepidity of Knox, the rich fancy of Taylor, the calm depth of Howe, the exhaustive power of Owen, the heavenly fervour of Baxter, the sententious and pungent style of Wesley, and the metaphysical force and deep spiritual insight of Edwards. It is indeed an illustrious company, and sacred as illustrious. They were all endowed with eminent gifts. They all loved the one personal, living, Divine Redeemer. They all strove to edify his body, the Church. They all taught that in him alone is everlasting life. As they pass before us in history, we discern the excellence of their character, we feel the power of their presence,

we profit by the variety and richness of their gifts, we become acquainted, through them, with the successive generations of believers, and we realize, to some extent at least, the oneness of Christ's mystical body, and the sweetness of communion with saints.

History, still again, demonstrates the abiding presence of God in the Church. That presence is the solution of what were, otherwise, utterly insolvable. We are apt to think of miracles especially in connection with the founding of Christianity, and as the necessary vouchers of its high claims. And so indeed they were. But there is a greater miracle than any or all of these. The continued being of the Church, in a world like this, along with her occasional triumphs, is the miracle of all time. It were a small thing to heal a diseased limb, or open a blind eye, or give life to a dead body, or calm the tempest by a word, in comparison with the work of begetting sons and daughters unto God, and maintaining truth and holiness, age after age, among fallen and hostile men, and confederate and mighty devils. No conceivable power, less than Divine power, could do it. And what the exigencies of the case so imperatively demand, History shows has been actually supplied. All along the pathway of the Church are the footsteps of God, the memorials of his presence and agency. His voice was heard in the garden, in denouncing judgment, telling also of grace. His Spirit strove with the generations before the flood. His presence was vouchsafed to the Hebrew Patriarchs. His arm wrought the deliverance from Egypt. His pillar of fire and cloud accompanied the tribes in the wilderness. His word was in the mouth of the Prophets. His dominion was represented by the throne and sceptre of the Kings. When Christ came in the flesh, God was with him, and he was God. When Christ returned to his glory, he said concerning the Eternal Spirit, "He shall abide with you for ever!" It was not a mere prediction. It was no conditional promise. It was rather a part of the constitution and law of

the Church, during the present dispensation. It has been literally realized. The Holy Spirit has dwelt with his people. His presence has been the light and salvation of the Church. It is he who wrought the simple and loving faith of the primitive disciples. It is he who gave courage and constancy to the Confessors and Martyrs. It is he who raised up and qualified the long line of faithful pastors and teachers. It is he who, through weary ages of conflict and corruption, preserved the pure faith of the Church, and continued the succession of the believing and holy. It is he who in modern days, has re-inaugurated the great work of missions, and is now making manifest his grace and power in numerous and glorious revivals. And all this is a prophecy and pledge of the future. With a heavenly origin, with a holy faith, with a sanctified ministry, with the indwelling Divine presence, attested by a history reaching now well nigh across six thousand years, how valid the hope, how grand the prospect, and how sure the triumph of the Church of God !

Such, Fathers and Brethren, is a mere glance at the work, in its two-fold aspect, assigned to me in this sacred Institution; and such are a few of the many particulars, by which the interest and importance of historical studies, in connection with the plan and course of Redemption, may be indicated. I enter upon this work in the confidence of your sympathy and prayers, and seeing that in it we specially serve a Church so illustrious in its place and influence along the past, so scriptural and powerful in its position as to the present, and of so glorious promise for the future; and above this, seeing that he is a most precious and a Divine Saviour whom we would thus glorify, shall we not, one and all, bring to it our choicest labour and our richest offerings? Let who will abide in their tents. Let us arise and do the work of the Lord!