

INAUGURAL ADDRESSES

AT THE OPENING

OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN

THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

OF THE

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NORTH WEST,

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS.



PHILADELPHIA:

JOSEPH M. WILSON,

No. 111 SOUTH TENTH STREET, BELOW CHESTNUT STREET.

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PRINCETON  
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## INTRODUCTION.

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(79)

## INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF W. M. SCOTT.

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BRETHREN OF THE DIRECTORY AND CHRISTIAN FRIENDS:—In the part of this service which you have required of me, it has occurred to me that you would naturally expect some indication of the conception which I have of the nature and ends of the department of instruction intrusted to me in this Seminary, and the general idea of the methods by which I propose to attain those ends in the actual course of instruction.

It is the peculiarity of our holy religion that it exists outwardly in the form of a Revelation from God, that Revelation in its complete and final form having been made matter of record, under such Divine inspiration as to secure absolute infallibility in matter and form. Accordingly that record in the form in which it was completed by the Holy Spirit, is the source of knowledge, and the standard of authority, in such sense that every word put therein by direction of the Divine Spirit we are bound to receive, and no word without that record *are* we bound to receive as of equal authority. For the purposes of this Revelation, for both communication and record, God has employed the marvellous framework of language, the instrument and vehiculum of human thought. Speech is embodied thought. Written speech is embodied thought, not em-

baled, but immortalized. It neither dies nor changes, while the record is preserved, so that while men retain the language in which the record subsists, they may come into living contact and communion with the original living thought.

For the purposes of the world-revelation, God chose not one, but two languages: the one to subserve the ends of a national, limited, preparatory dispensation; the other to complete and complement the revelation, and adapt it to universal diffusion amongst men, and to the great purpose of persuasion, *πειθειν*, to the production of that state of mind, which is at once the means of salvation and of growth, faith, *πιστις*, the result of persuasion, and the principle of obedience. This is not the time nor the place for the discussion of the reasons of these things; why God chose two languages rather than one, and why the two he did rather than any other of the manifold forms that human speech has assumed.

It is enough that these are facts, acknowledged, undeniable, and therefore to be accepted in all their consequences. This Divine Book in these two languages is put into the hand of a divinely ordained order of Church officers, to be by them taught to men, for the obedience of faith among all nations. Whatever else these men may know or not know, this Divine Book, of which they are the professional teachers and defenders, they are surely bound to know—know in every sense and to every intent, to which they are set to teach it to others. Accordingly it is of the reason and nature of the case that they who are thus to teach must themselves first be taught—taught what they are to teach, the actual contents of this Divine record.

They are to be taught, not simply as others are taught, with the view of their own personal persuasion and obedience, but also, and mainly here, with the view to their teaching others. This involves the two processes of learning and communicating, of understanding and fitly interpreting.

It is apparent then how fundamental this department of the



languages and interpretation of the original Scriptures must be to the whole scheme of professional training of the authoritative teachers of this recorded religion. To this must everything be referred as its source. Upon correct interpretation of this Divine record in its only inspired form must everything taught here rest for its value and authority. And when the men trained here go forth to their work amongst men, everything they shall accomplish for God in the way of the salvation of souls must be done through the means of this very truth of God. In all that men may say *about* this truth, in all the masses of human learning that have been accumulated upon it, there is nothing in the way of saving truth, but what itself has directly furnished. This necessitates the keeping of the active ministry in constant contact with the truth in its inspired sources, if they would do well and faithfully the work to which they are ordained, teach men these given words of God, for this is the test of fidelity which the Saviour applied to himself: *For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me.*

The end of this department of instruction in the Seminary I conceive to be, to meet this demand of the active ministry, to enable them to commune with the living truth of God in its inspired forms and sources, to hear constantly, and to interpret for the people, the very words of the Spirit, to get between it and all human authority, and gain the right use of all human aids. And thus to be able to say to the people, whose souls they are to win and to feed with knowledge, with the confidence of those who know, *Thus saith Jehovah. Hear the word of the Lord.*

With this as the central idea of the design of this department, many others naturally connect themselves more or less intimately. Though it is proper to regard some things as settled by those who have gone before us, yet there is a stage in our progress where justice to ourselves and to them requires us to examine the grounds on which they have rested their decisions,

so that their mere authority shall not stand as the foundation of our faith, but take its proper place as evidence. So that, though at the outset it is proper and wise for us to accept at the hands of our fathers what they deliver to us as Scripture, there comes a time in the course of preparation for the teaching of these Scriptures, as the word of God for the faith of men, when the question must be raised and answered: *What is Scripture?* And on what grounds have these different books in this collection been always received by the faith of the Church? This requires the stream of mingling evidence and authority to be traced to the highest accessible point, and the internal character of each to be examined with enlightened fairness, so that if possible our reception of every book of Scripture shall be grounded on the very evidence that taught the first hand receiver that it was the very word of God.

Intimately connected with this is the great question as to the state of the record. As it has had various fortunes in the course of the ages, as it has been intrusted to the fidelity of many hands in its preservation, as its friends and its enemies have had something to do with it, what is the result as we have it now, in our Hebrew and Greek Bibles? This of itself must be a vast department of inquiry and learning; and though reason and philosophy require us to accept as settled the conclusion of our predecessors, there is a time and place in the progress of preparation for the teaching of this book to examine for ourselves these questions, so that our minds may, as far as the nature of the case allows, rest on the very grounds of belief that satisfied those who have most fully examined, converting again their authority into testimony.

The state of the languages when the record was made in each, the history of the changes through which they passed to that state, the places they held in the great families of languages to which they severally belong, together with the intimate nature and providential career of each, which fitted it in a peculiar manner to its office, as the vehicle of the revela-



tion, all fall appropriately within the province of this department, and enter essentially into the ideal result at which it aims in the thoroughly qualified minister, able rightly to divide the word of truth.

So also would it be presumptuous folly for the young man to be taught to regard the labours of predecessors as worthless to him; all that has been done rightly, much that has been done wrongly and wickedly in the way of actual interpretation and exposition, will therefore justly claim his attention, with the principles on which all the work of interpretation is to be done, and all results judged and tested.

Gathering all these within the province of one department of instruction, limiting the time to the narrow space of less than three years, and making the necessary abatements for the fact that one of these languages must be taught from its very elements, and the other in many cases had better be, and making the needful allowance for three other cotemporaneous and exacting departments of instruction, and you will be able to judge how far it would be just to expect results, rather than beginnings, and mere indication of methods, and training to habits of study and investigation.

II. The general methods which I propose to myself on which to conduct the practical instruction of this department, are readily deduced from the nature and the ends of it, already briefly suggested. •

1. The first thing required is that the students be made *Greek and Hebrew scholars*. This does not mean simply the ability, with the aid of lexicon and grammar and perhaps translation to "get a lesson," but such an acquaintance with them as to make the reading of a chapter or a book in either no longer a terror or a drudgery, if not an absolute pleasure and delight. It is such a knowledge as to make the original much more clear and suggestive than any version can possibly be, as will make it the only satisfactory source of knowledge of any passage to which attention is specially directed. The

method of attaining this is expected to be the old familiar one of requiring the *drudgery* at the hand of the student. The only secret of language in its elementary stages of acquisition is *repetition*, until the conscious exercise of memory is no longer necessary.

2. This will naturally bring with it the practice of keeping them employed in the actual work of interpretation, of keeping them always in contact with the actual teachings of the original Scriptures, allowing the merely human learning of the subject to come as little between the mind and the sacred text as possible. The analogy of teaching a mechanical trade or training an athlete furnishes an illustration of the reasonableness of this. The master does not content himself with only or chiefly explaining the principles of the different exercises, with their adaptation to the development of the various muscles of the body, nor even with performing before his pupils the various operations of the master workman, or the trained athlete. The chief part of the instruction is in guiding the actual exercises of the learners, so as through their own voluntary power and exertions to reach the result. It is by doing their best in *trying* to-day, that they will do the same thing better to-morrow. Eminently thus in the matter of interpreting a written record in any language, and especially one not native. Every sincere, well directed attempt to reach the sense, and explain a passage of, the sacred record is a gain in all the requisites for another attempt.

Until this result is attained, the collateral learning of the subject is very much wasted in the attempt to communicate it, and therefore may be safely left to a very subordinate place, or to future acquisition. I know there is danger connected with this method, of a result expressed in exaggerated form and severity by a witty reviewer, exhibited in the ministry who had been personally trained by Simeon, that he sent them forth armed with an oyster knife, instead of the sword of the Spirit. The ability to draw and quarter a text, and get

out of it the four divisions and six reflections of a sermon is not the kind of ability aimed at. But the power of attaining the very mind of the Spirit, from the very words of the Spirit, and all the light shed upon the particular passage from a knowledge of all the other utterances of the Spirit and the Divine proportion of faith, is the ideal result; and then to employ this knowledge, accurate, broad, logical, in communicating the same truths in appropriate forms to the minds of the people.

This I conceive to be no disparagement of human learning, or of the pursuits of the mere scholar. It is following the method of Divine wisdom, which has been justified by the highest merely human wisdom. The great satirist and poet of Rome expresses the ideal result, when he cautions us to beware of the man of a single book. His observation had shown him that the man who thoroughly possessed himself of the spirit, and yielded himself to the educating power of one really great book, was the man of real force and dangerous efficiency. The thorough mastery of resources, the prompt energy of effort, which make men of men, equal to their work whatever it may be, all come, not so much from a hurried acquaintance with many books, as the thorough possession of the mind with one really great and educating book.

And surely I need not dwell in this presence upon the character and power of the Bible as such a great, informing, educating book to the human soul. When God puts this book into the hands of a class of men to study it up to the highest measure of their power, he requires them to be men of the single book in this eminent sense, of making it the instrument of their personal education, and the means of their power in the formation of other minds. And it may be safely predicted as of the nature of the case, what the best experience demonstrates as the actual result, that the ministers who are most the men of this single book, and the people who are trained under their influences, will be the highest specimens of vigorous thinking,

and efficient working men. I need but point you to the land of Scotland, for both an illustration and proof of all this.

This view of the case, you would naturally expect from one who had been summoned from the ranks of the active, practical ministry, to take charge of this department of instruction in your Seminary, rather than such as would be natural in one whose life had been devoted to the graceful pursuits of the speculative, elegant scholar, whose whole converse has lain among books, without taking the time to turn, and employ his acquisitions as instruments of power over his fellow men, especially in bringing them to the knowledge of God for their salvation. Such men have their high and honoured use and office, and it will be a sad day for the ministers of religion, if they should ever lose a thorough sympathy with them. They are the engineers of human thought and progress, pushing their examinations, and opening broad, practicable roads for the great army of humanity. But the great body of the actual ministry must ever be directing officers of the march, keeping compact the columns, taking care of the hospitals and the general discipline and efficiency of soldiers and camp followers. Their post must generally be with the *main body*, but in thorough sympathy with the pioneers.

3. It may not be judged amiss for me to bespeak your co-operation, in all the ways in which that co-operation can tend to the general result, in your several offices of Directors and Presbyters. As directors the students here should recognize and feel that your eye is ever upon them, encouraging, stimulating, requiring high attainments in these central studies of the Christian ministry. But it is in your places as Presbyters that most may be done to elevate the standard of the coming ministry, by practically showing that the knowledge of the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures is an actual, as well as formal requirement for licensure and ordination; that such a knowledge as will be of use to them *in the ministry*, is what you require, rather than such a smattering as will merely enable

them to stand an examination, and be most conveniently forgotten, when the ordeal is past. How many Presbyteries are untrue to themselves, and to the interests of the rising ministry in this respect, it would not be seemly here to discuss. But it is perfectly apparent how futile must be the effort of a Seminary to maintain a high standard of scholarship in this department, in the midst of surrounding Presbyteries, that constantly discharge their office of trial and judgment in such ways, as to operate effectually in lowering or debasing the standard. Let us at least have the encouragement that the highest attainments to which we can bring the young men that shall go out from us here, shall be made the actual *bona fide* standard of your requirements, according to the laws of the Church, and we shall feel the power of such a sanction in the whole course of instruction. Let us be able to tell our students with confidence that really creditable attainments in these vital studies are not merely necessary to the proper discharge of the work of the ministry, but will be held an essential condition of admission to the office, and we shall be in less danger of slights and evasions in the work of the student. If you let him know that real, thorough knowledge alone, will be his passport to that high and sacred office, the entrance to which you are divinely set to keep; that he need not apply to you at all, until he has the attainments, our work here will be divested of much of its most discouraging difficulty.

4. As one great part of the training of the ministry should always be promotion of their own personal piety and holiness, it may be hoped that the department of their studies which brings them most constantly and intimately into contact with the sacred truths of God in their inspired forms, may be so managed by the blessing of God as to tend perpetually in that direction. Eminent examples of the highest learning, imbued with the most earnest and humble spirit of devotion, have demonstrated that this result is not impossible, but on the contrary that there can be nothing more favourable to spirituality



of mind and growth in the graces of the heart than these pursuits, requiring the severest mental application to the forms of truth in these venerable tongues. This is of the reason of the case, since these truths are given to sanctify the soul. And it is not what men may say about them, not the human learning that has been employed in their illustration, but the living words as they proceeded from the mouth of God that are efficacious to this result.

The aim shall be, never to allow the student to forget that it is God's word he is dealing with, in every stage of his knowledge of the tongues in which he chose to speak to men, and that the guide who only can lead him into all truth is the Holy Spirit given in answer to prayer. The spiritual discernment which is necessary to the salvation and sanctification of the man's own soul, is the very discernment of the truth which is the condition of communication to others. The study of the Scriptures as a means of grace, as well as a means of culture and furniture, shall therefore be kept in constant view.

With these conceptions of the nature and ends of this department of instruction in this Seminary, and these purposes as to the methods upon which it is to be conducted, I cast myself on your generous indulgence, and the aid of Him whose prerogative it is to call and qualify his ministers to the end of time. It may argue in your judgment an inadequate sense of the nature of the work, that I venture upon it at all, from the labours and exactions of a pastoral charge, which allowed little time or thought for the patient study and wide range of learning required in this vast field of knowledge. Some of you know how difficult it is for the laborious pastor to keep abreast of the learning of his profession. Some of you perhaps know how hard it is to retain even the acquisitions of his student days. Let me ask of you then a little time, before you apply to me in judgment the lofty standards of those whose transcendent powers have been for their whole lives



devoted to these vast ranges of study. Perhaps students may not make the less progress with one who is obliged to travel so much in their company as to sympathize in all their experiences, to appreciate all their difficulties, and share in the joy of all their fresh discoveries.

That true modesty which generally requires a man to say nothing of himself may sometimes demand the thing it generally forbids. I may be pardoned for judging such to be the case now, even if the judgment be mistaken.

Why am I here, bearing the part I now do in these solemn and important transactions? I have not sought it. Those of you who know most of the matter, know that I was not even consulted, know that I sincerely sought to shun it after the voice of the Church, to which I owe my highest earthly allegiance, had been pronounced solemnly bidding me take the service. None knew so well as I, and therefore none more sincerely distrusted my fitness for the work. Sincerely, earnestly, I sought to put by me the call that summoned me away from the work of my choice, and a people whom I loved and still love, with no common measure of tenderness. But the General Assembly, my brethren and friends, and as I believe my Master, judged otherwise, and I humbly bow to their decision. In convulsive sorrow I separated myself from a people whose generous love seemed to warm to deeper tenderness by our being called to part. The sadness of that deep sorrow still rests upon my heart, and adds to the deep solemnity with which, under any circumstances, I must accept the perils, the responsibilities, and the toils, which if left to myself I would have gladly shunned, with the purpose still to do what God enables me, to justify the act.

Nothing but a profound conviction that it is the Master's call, and a humble but abiding sympathy with the objects of the great Christian brotherhood in whose name and by whose sanction all these proceedings are had, has brought me here.

In the bosom of one of the youngest Synods, in the heart of this youthful city, far out in the centre of this vast continent, with a vast free empire rising towards the setting sun, the whole Presbyterian Church comes to accomplish that last and most difficult work of our organized Christianity, the proper teaching of those whom God shall call as the teachers of his people. With all her priceless heritage of history, with all her gifts in trust for the souls of men, with all her love for God, for country, and for truth, she comes to bear her part in conquering this rising empire to the Prince of Peace. She comes to raise up and qualify her sons to preach the truth as he hath given it to her, committing it to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Men who shall dare, as her great fathers dared, to maintain and defend the integrity and sufficiency of God's truth and gospel; who shall have the learning to know how far he goes, and the courage to go that far, and to know where he stops, and the sometimes greater courage to stop just there; who shall be as careful to teach nothing but the truth, for the faith of men, as the whole truth; who shall be as slow to add, or allow others to add to what he hath proclaimed as his law, as to take, or allow to be taken, aught therefrom—even in his name. She does not ordain and establish this Seminary to lower the standard of learning in her ministry, nor to invent for them any other message to the souls and faith of men, but that old story of the cross. This day's work recalls a momentous career over which that Church has already past. These proceedings point to results vast beyond all that can be predicted by man, and commit the Church of which we are members to a future which she may not have the grace to estimate aright. According to her faith shall it be done to her, and done by her. May the voice and the influence that shall go forth from this Seminary, even to countless generations of teachers and pupils, be such as to cheer onward to higher efforts, and broader conquests, and more ex-

hausting sacrifices, and deeper trust in God, the hosts that shall be called from their graves of worldliness and sin by the voice of these heralds of the truth. And may the spirit of the first great Teachers of the first great Seminary of this Church upon these shores be perpetuated in all the departments of this youngest born of the bright sisterhood, till the ministry of men shall be set aside by the bright appearing of the Son of God.