

The Princeton Theological Review

OCTOBER 1926

JOHN D. DAVIS*

The Reverend John D. Davis, Doctor of Philosophy, Doctor of Divinity, Doctor of Laws, Helena Professor of Oriental and Old Testament Literature in Princeton Theological Seminary, died on June 21, 1926, in the seventy-third year of his age.

At the beginning of the last academic session he seemed to be in the full enjoyment of his usual vigor of body and mind, and, so far as his colleagues could observe, he performed his duties throughout the year with his customary fidelity, efficiency, and success. Few, even among those intimately associated with him, had any inkling that his health was being impaired. His familiar form was conspicuous for its absence from the Commencement Exercises in May, and as the word spread among the members of the Faculty, the graduating class, and the large gathering of alumni and friends of the Seminary, that our beloved senior professor had left town in order to undergo a surgical operation, expressions of sincere regret and deep solicitude were heard on every hand; nor were our apprehensions altogether allayed by the assurance, emanating from a seemingly trustworthy source, that under normal circumstances his early restoration might be confidently expected. All that human skill and af-

* A memorial discourse, delivered by appointment of the Faculty of Princeton Theological Seminary, in Miller Chapel, on Tuesday, October 12, 1926.

fection could suggest was done for the distinguished patient in the Jefferson Hospital in Philadelphia, and for some time he made satisfactory progress. But as the days grew into weeks, the reports concerning his increasing weakness began to dim our hopes of his ultimate recovery, and then to fill us with grave forebodings of the irreparable loss his departure would inflict upon us and upon the institution to which not only all the years of his professional career but his very life itself had been dedicated. Those who were privileged to know him in the strength and beauty of his Christian character will find no occasion for surprise in the testimony of Dr. E. P. Davis, a college classmate and intimate friend: "In his last illness of six weeks, he greatly endeared himself to those who cared for him. His courage, patience, and unselfishness were remarkable." But the time of his departure had come, and quietly, with the peace of God in his heart, he fell on sleep, meeting death as one meets a familiar friend. Another commencement season—that of Princeton University, his *alma mater*—was just at its height on that lovely Monday in June, when the sad tidings from Philadelphia reached this community. Among the visiting alumni were many of his own academic generation who, recalling his brilliant career at college and his long and eminently fruitful and influential life-work, that more than fulfilled the promise of his youth, paid grateful tribute to his memory. On the following Wednesday afternoon, June 23, the funeral services were held at his late residence, and the body was laid to rest in the Princeton Cemetery.

We mourn our heavy loss. The passing months have only deepened our sense of the affliction that has befallen us. I do not venture to speak for those who have been most sorely bereaved; for that home which cherished him as husband and father, and which he so richly blessed with the treasures of his mind and heart. Nor am I mindful only of my individual sorrow over the death of a revered preceptor and dear friend. I am thinking of the Faculty, most of whom were likewise once his pupils, and all of whom honored and admired him as

the incumbent of the illustrious chair he adorned, and esteemed him as a brother beloved. I am thinking of the returning students, who have been deprived of a professor at whose feet they sat with grateful appreciation and delight. I am thinking of the hundreds, nay the thousands, of graduates of this institution throughout our country and in all parts of the world, who are deeply sensible of the incalculable debt they owe this venerated teacher for benefits received from his scholarly accomplishments, his pedagogical skill, his intellectual stimulation, his spiritual wisdom, his faith-confirming instruction in the Bible, and his exemplary Christian life. I am thinking of this whole community—this Princeton that he so dearly loved—where he received his collegiate and theological education, and where he fulfilled his calling through more than forty years, making his labors add to the renown of this ancient seat of learning, and leaving as a citizen of this place a name of inflexible integrity and unsullied honor, a record of quiet but faithful devotion to all civic duty. And I am thinking of the Church at large, our own communion and sister evangelical denominations, which he has enriched by his contribution to the training of so many of their ministers and their missionaries, and by the products of his gifted pen, that inspired many Christian standard-bearers to look to him, as unto a trustworthy leader, for expert knowledge, for wholesome counsel, for safe guidance, for that discretion that is the better part of valor, and for that courage that is born of the conviction, intelligent and profound, that the revealed truth of God cannot fail of its ultimate triumph in the thought and life of the world. Truly, we have reason to mourn for ourselves, for this Seminary, and for the whole Church, as we contemplate the loss of so eminent a scholar, so successful a teacher, so influential an author, so effective a defender of the faith, and withal so worthy an embodiment of that divine grace that reveals its very noblest ministry of sanctification when it clothes the high talents and achievements of an erudite man of science with the modesty and humility of the true seeker after God.

But though we mourn, we sorrow neither as those who have no hope, nor yet as those who forget the obligations of gratitude. Rather are we here to-day to commemorate, with thanksgiving to the Author of all good, this well-spent life. We who knew his sterling work and worth would honor his memory with the homage of our admiration and affection. In this sacred place, where as student, instructor, and professor he joined in worship with so many of our academic generations, and where so often at morning prayers and in the Sunday services he led us in our devotions and proclaimed to us the word of the Lord, we would reverently glorify God in him.

There are elements, indeed, in the highly specialized and technical scholarship of Dr. Davis—notably in the fields of biblical archaeology and Assyriology—which make me poignantly aware of my limitations in trying to meet the just requirements of the service of this hour. But I accepted the appointment by my colleagues, because I realized that the invitation was one to which circumstances gave the authority of a command, and more especially because I felt justified in the conviction, that veneration and affectionate regard for one whom I have known as teacher, colleague, and friend for thirty years would transform the duty into one of those labors of love in which the difficulties involved are lost to view amidst a throng of grateful memories.

John D. Davis was born in the city of Pittsburgh on the fifth day of March, 1854. On his father's side, three generations of the family had lived in New York and Pennsylvania since the year 1784, when James Davis, like his father before him a friend of Wesley and a licensed exhorter among the Methodists, left his native Ireland for America. A capable and enterprising business man, he established cracker factories in Cooperstown and Albany. In 1808, his son John, a youth of eighteen, crossed the mountains, and at Pittsburgh built and successfully conducted a bakery of his own. He was a member of the famous Pittsburgh Blues and saw serv-

ice in the War of 1812, being wounded at Fort Meigs. Robert, the third in this descending line, and the father of Dr. Davis, continued for a number of years the hereditary business. The strong Presbyterian traditions of western Pennsylvania had for some time been dissolving the Wesleyan affiliations of the family, and in this member of it had produced an efficient elder and Sunday school superintendent, first in the Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville, to-day a part of Pittsburgh, and subsequently in its offshoot, the Forty-third Street Church in the same city. The maiden name of Dr. Davis's mother was Anne Shaw. She was the daughter of a Lawrenceville farmer, whose ancestors in Yorkshire, England, had for generations been owners of cloth manufactories and fulling works.

Sprung from a stock marked by such vigor, capacity, ambition, and piety, Dr. Davis spent his childhood and youth in a home that admirably reflected not only the industry, thrift, and enterprise but also the evangelical faith and the high ethical standards of that predominantly Ulster Scot Presbyterian community. The boy was fortunate, too, in the educational opportunities he enjoyed in the city that was rapidly developing into the chief metropolis of western Pennsylvania. He received his academic training at Newell's Classical Institute, one of his teachers there being William M. Sloane, whose later distinguished career at the College of New Jersey and at Columbia University gave to our departed friend, as to the members of many classes that enjoyed his courses in general history, frequent occasion to recall with pride and gratitude his inspiring personality and his instructive lectures. At about fifteen years of age, as Dr. Davis himself has recorded the fact, he became, on profession of his faith, a communicant member of the Lawrenceville Presbyterian Church. At seventeen he was ready for college, but family reverses caused by the panic of 1870 necessitated a delay of four years in the prosecution of his plans. During most of this period he was employed as a teller in one of the Pittsburgh banks,—an experience which, costly

as it was in the time taken from preparation for what was destined to be *par excellence* the vocation of a learned specialist, nevertheless must have contributed not a little to his future success by serving to develop that robust common sense, that sobriety and soundness of judgment, and that businesslike directness of method and style that characterized his work in the classroom, and that regard for practical considerations that marked his counsel in the deliberations of the Faculty.

Mr. Davis had thus already attained his majority when, in the fall of 1875, he entered Princeton College as a freshman. Older than most of his classmates, he was likewise more earnest and faithful in the use of his academic privileges. He had worked hard to secure the benefits of a liberal education, and he was determined to make the most of his opportunities. We are not surprised to learn that throughout his course he maintained an intense devotion to his scholastic duties. Neither in those days nor in later years did he have any sympathy with that conception of a university which reduces it to a mere annex to a football field or a hockey rink. A classmate, the same Dr. Davis to whom I have already referred, testified that at college his friend was "remarkable for the uniform excellence of his attainment"; that "in direct contrast to many who pursue their studies but carefully avoid overtaking them, he caught up with all his"; that "his friends were the studious, thoughtful men of high moral ideals"; and further, that "he was greatly liked throughout his class"; and that "his piety was evident without being obtrusive." As is well known, the class of 1879 at Princeton has on its roll an unusual proportion of graduates who achieved distinction in their various walks in life. Among them was Woodrow Wilson, one of the two Presidents of the United States whom Nassau Hall has contributed to the service of our country, the other being James Madison, of the class of 1771. It is therefore a tribute no less to his fidelity and zeal as a student than to the vigor and versatility of his natural endowments that, in a class of so many gifted men, the highest academic honor, that of the Latin salutatory at com-

mencement, was conferred by the Faculty upon him whose life and work we are commemorating.

And there is another entry in the college record of Dr. Davis which deserves mention, not only as a further recognition by the authorities of his ability and attainments, but also as an important formative influence in the making of the future professor. A fellowship in the classics was awarded to him at graduation. I have it on good authority that President McCosh had hoped that Mr. Davis would prefer the fellowship in philosophy. And one cannot but wonder what the outcome would have been, had this talented student devoted a graduate year or two to the cultivation of the theoretical sciences. Doubtless, he was well aware by that time of the bent of his mind, with its fondness for concrete knowledge, and its rather pronounced aversion, if one may judge from later evidence, to the abstractions of metaphysical thought. But I can readily imagine how such pursuits might have furnished an admirable supplement to his rare linguistic gifts and imparted to his instruction, especially in the exegetical courses, a more highly organized form and possibly also a stronger doctrinal interest. But I must not anticipate. Let it here suffice to say that philosophic acumen and breadth are not often found in fruitful wedlock with the meticulous erudition of the philological expert. At all events, we must regard the year which Mr. Davis spent as Classical Fellow at the University of Bonn, Germany, as a quite decisive factor in his intellectual development. It confirmed the set of his mind toward the study of language and literature. It was only a question of time, when his deeply religious nature would make him exchange the treasures of Greece and Rome for the greater riches found in the sacred Scriptures of ancient Israel.

Accordingly, after spending another year in Europe, partly in more general study and partly in travel, Mr. Davis entered upon his theological course in this Seminary. His work in Germany gave him advanced standing in some of the subjects, and he completed the curriculum in two years,

graduating in 1883, and receiving, in recognition of his general excellence in scholarship and his special attainments in the Old Testament, the George S. Green Fellowship in Hebrew. The award was doubtless the more highly prized by him in view of the fact that it was accompanied by an invitation from the Faculty to assist during the next session in the instruction in Hebrew,—an invitation the acceptance of which would facilitate his realization of a cherished wish, that of lengthening from two semesters to four the customary period spent abroad in graduate study by the winners of this fellowship.

The academic year beginning in the fall of 1883 marks, therefore, the commencement of Dr. Davis's notable career as a teacher. I have no information in regard to his maiden efforts as an assistant in the department of which in due time he would be the honored head. But his success may be inferred from the fact that after completing two years of further study at the University of Leipsic—1884 to 1886—the Seminary offered him the John C. Green Instructorship in Hebrew, left vacant by the withdrawal of Dr. James F. McCurdy.

With respect to this second sojourn in Germany, we need only remark that from the standpoint of general scholarship and special preparation for work in the Old Testament, he had now become one of the best equipped men in the whole realm of theological education in this country. Particularly in Assyriology, then still little more than a budding science, but already giving assurance of a valuable fruitage, he had made extensive acquisitions and, having selected for his more intensive cultivation a tract of unusual promise—the relation of early Semitic tradition to the narratives in the first chapters of Genesis—he tilled this field with the diligence and enthusiasm of the husbandman confident of a rich harvest. Incidentally, it may be added that, like most Americans who in those days attended German universities, especially in the large cities, Dr. Davis found much in the life of this gifted people to broaden and enrich his general cul-

ture. He familiarized himself with the masterpieces of art in their museums and galleries. He learned to know and to love their music. He deepened his knowledge of their literary classics. He worshipped with them in their churches and got a better understanding of their simple but fervent and genial piety, so different from what the casual observer in their theological classrooms would expect. He entered sympathetically into their manners and customs and permitted himself to come under the spell of that untranslatable but very real *Gemüthlichkeit* that gives German social life its delightful charm. And he made friends. One of the most beautiful letters of condolence I have ever read was that sent to his bereaved family by the lady—a Roman Catholic—in whose home he lived as a student in Leipsic forty years ago,—an impressive revelation of the enduring influence for good which this young American had exerted upon that entire household.

Returning to Princeton in 1886 to resume the instructorship in Hebrew, he secured from the College of New Jersey that same year the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, chiefly upon the basis of the work he had been doing abroad. In April, 1887, he was ordained to the Gospel ministry by the Presbytery of Pittsburgh at Shadyside. As early as 1888 his services as instructor received recognition in his election as Professor of Hebrew and Cognate Languages. In 1892 the title of his chair was changed to that of Semitic Philology and Old Testament History; and in 1900, on the death of Dr. William Henry Green—generally recognized as the foremost Hebraist in America and the most influential defender of the unity of Genesis, the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, and the authenticity of the biblical history—he succeeded this illustrious scholar as the Helena Professor of Oriental and Old Testament Literature. In June 1889, he married Miss Marguerite Scobie, of San Francisco, California, and presently established his home in the house we have so long been accustomed to associate with his name. In 1898 he was honored by Princeton University with the

degree of Doctor of Divinity, and in 1902 by Washington and Jefferson College with the degree of Doctor of Laws.

Such in bare outline are the salient facts in the development of our late senior professor. And so far as the data of external biography are concerned, little more will need to be said. For his was the typically uneventful life of the scholar. He was an intelligent observer of affairs but he did not come into close touch with them. Seldom was his voice heard in address or sermon outside of Princeton. He took no public part in the Revision Controversy that arose during the first decade of his professorship, or in the conflict of recent years between so-called Fundamentalism and Modernism. Nothing was more to his taste than a lively discussion in the classroom over some disputed point in biblical criticism or exegesis; but he disliked warfare in the church courts, and, it may be added, he had little aptitude for it. Owing to his temperament, and no doubt also because of the nature of his work in the Old Testament, he had no great zeal for purely denominational questions and issues. In the ordinary sense of the term, he was no churchman. Coveting neither office nor honor of any kind, and having no personal ends to gratify, he held himself aloof from everything that savored of ecclesiastical politics.

Along the cool sequestered vale of life
He kept the noiseless tenor of his way.

Modest, reserved, self-repressing, diffident at times to the point of shyness, he well knew he was not at his best on the conference platform or in the arena of theological debate. Once only in the almost forty years of his membership in the Presbytery of New Brunswick did he consent to serve as a commissioner to the General Assembly. He had no hanker for publicity, no ambition to be a maker of programmes for others to carry out, no desire to be conspicuous in moulding events by direct personal influence upon them: rather would he spend himself, quite unseen of the world, in training a succession of men who would be able and who, let us add, would commonly enough be willing to essay the rôle of active lead-

ership. Fond of travel, and keenly interested in everything that makes it worth while, he visited Palestine and made repeated trips to Europe for study and recreation; but there is nothing of an official or public character connected with these incidents. They, too, only serve to emphasize that singleness of purpose that dominated his whole life-work. "This one thing I do" was his vocational motto.¹ As much as in him lay, he would give himself to the duties of his chair. He was content, nay it was his delight, to be *totus in illis*. He was not one of that rather large and in the aggregate very influential class of men—the Christian ministry has probably furnished the best examples of the sort—who can do various things fairly well, and whose claims to special recognition, if there are any, are due to their versatility. Rather is it his distinction that he brought the resources of a keen and vigorous intellect, the scientific equipment of one of the best orientalists of his day, and the judicial temper of a finished scholar to bear upon his chosen specialty, and that in the good providence and grace of God he was enabled to devote to this work, as instructor and professor, an undivided attention and an unflagging zeal for forty-one years.

Dr. Davis came to his chair, as we have said, in 1888. His colleagues in the Faculty at that time were, in the order of seniority, Dr. Green, Dr. Caspar Wistar Hodge, Dr. Aiken, Dr. Patton, who that same year became President of Princeton College but continued to serve the Seminary as Lecturer on Theism, Dr. Paxton, and Dr. Warfield, who had just begun to occupy the chair he was destined so long and so greatly to adorn. With one exception, all were graduates of the Seminary, and all save the last two had been on the teaching staff when Dr. Davis was a student here. It is as beautiful in itself as it is significant for the best traditions of this institution, that the new arrival in the Faculty was deeply impressed by the unity and concord of its members, by the strictly organic character of the Seminary's life, and by the charm of that *genius hujus loci* that has here ever haunted the home of its birth and imbued and moulded one

by one those who have come under its benign influence. As he himself expressed it, the professors were "members one of another, animated by the same purpose, having the same aims, mutually dependent upon one another, and contributors to one another." And what he says of his predecessor, Dr. Green, when the latter entered upon his professorship in 1851, is equally true of himself in 1888: "Of this organism [he] at once became an integral part, consciously and heartily so. He was actuated by its spirit, he rejoiced in its type of life, and he performed his work as a function of the institution, harmoniously related to the labors of his colleagues."

To estimate the contribution which Dr. Davis made to this organism of the Seminary's life and service, and the better to understand the methods and ideals of scholarship which he had, so to say, inherited from his teachers, especially his predecessors in his own field, and which he in turn so ably maintained, it may be well to recall a few outstanding facts in the development of this department. The story is resplendent with some of the most illustrious names in the history of higher education in our country. This Seminary has always maintained that for sound and solid work in theological science the study of the original languages of the Bible is indispensable. Exegesis of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures has been from the beginning the very centre and core of our theological curriculum—the trunk of our whole tree of sacred knowledge. It has been the glory of this school of the prophets that it has never been willing to make its final appeal to the authority either of the Latin Vulgate or of any other version of the Bible. Instruction in Hebrew, therefore, was part of the task committed to Dr. Archibald Alexander, the first professor in this Seminary; and the first book produced within the sphere of the department we are considering was his treatise on the canon of Scripture, a volume of which six American editions were called for during the author's lifetime, besides one each in England and Scotland. As early as 1820, a special instructorship in the original languages of Scripture was established, with the

Rev. Charles Hodge as the incumbent. And apparently it was not only this teacher and the governing boards of the Seminary that were enthusiastic over these linguistic courses; for we find that in 1822 the Junior Class pledged itself to raise \$7,000 for a Professorship in Oriental and Biblical Literature, and the Senior Class \$4,000. What good reason there may be for the silence of my sources in regard to contributions from the Middlers of that day, I do not know; but the professorship was forthwith created, and Dr. Hodge gave eighteen of his nearly sixty years of service in the Seminary to the duties of this chair. But it was Dr. Joseph Addison Alexander, that superb scholar with his veritable genius for philology and his altogether remarkable gifts of interpretation and expression, who from 1835 to 1851 organized the Old Testament department at Princeton and gave it an international reputation. And in 1846 William Henry Green began, as instructor in Hebrew, his eminent career of over half a century in his chosen field. An acknowledged authority speaks of him as "the most influential Hebrew teacher of his time among English-speaking men." But Dr. Green was much more than a grammarian. His work in vindicating the scholarliness of conservative higher criticism in general, and in particular the unity and authenticity of the Pentateuch and the trustworthiness of Scripture as a supernatural revelation of redemption, entitles him to a foremost place among the great apologists of the Christian Church.

It was, then, as an heir and beneficiary of such splendid traditions of theological education that Dr. Davis took his place in that noble succession of teachers and authors who have given our Old Testament department a commanding position in the world of scholarship. How well, we must now ask, did he fill the measure of his opportunity? What did he accomplish? What was the scope and quality of his service, and what, so far as one can gauge it, was the sum total of his influence?

Let us first of all survey the work of the professor in his classroom. With your permission I shall here draw mainly upon my own recollections as a student; for though these are now three decades old and may seem to my youngest hearers to belong to the cycle of time known as ancient history, they are still sufficiently vivid to warrant my use of them as trustworthy. Only let me add, in justice to myself and my theme, that on various points of interest I have exchanged notes and impressions with classmates and with students of more recent years.

When I entered the Seminary as a Junior in 1897, Dr. Davis had three required courses in the curriculum. We first came under his tuition in Hebrew. This instruction, five hours a week, formed in those days the major part of his duties in the classroom. For the first four years of his professorship, he was alone in this linguistic work; but after 1892, when the John C. Green Instructorship was again filled, he had an assistant. In 1900, when the department was reorganized and he was transferred to Dr. Green's chair, the course in elementary Hebrew was committed to other hands. There were thus some twelve classes, or, if we count the years of his instructorship, fifteen, whom Dr. Davis introduced to the study of the Old Testament in the original.

I well remember the professor of those days. He was then in the early forties, and his individuality, quite as marked at that time as in more recent years, was one not soon to be forgotten. I can see him now, his note-book under his arm, slowly sauntering toward Stuart Hall, with that long, springy stride that gave his gait a kind of rhythmical undulation. His personality, as we viewed him behind his desk, was one to command instant respect. Slender of build, but tall, erect, energetic, dignified, and solemn even to seeming austerity, he at first sight impressed more than he attracted. But so gentle was his voice, his spirit so reverent, humble, sincere, and earnest, and his whole bearing so modest, unassuming, and friendly, that we soon found in

him much besides his scholarship to admire. There was something peculiarly arresting, too, in that quick, jerky toss of his head to one side, and in the very angularities of his gesticulation, as he held his long right arm aloft, almost at full length, to introduce some new turn of thought or give point to some emphatic phrase in his slow and measured style of utterance. In his winsome face the most striking features were his full, clear, brown eyes, tranquil and meditative; scrutinous and penetrating as you felt their steady gaze; but ever and anon rolling sharply upward, half furtively, as if they fain would shrink from meeting yours, half wistfully, as if in quest of some thought lurking in the topmost recesses of his mind; but kindly withal, and suffusing his whole countenance with a benign serenity. Such an outward appearance was the man in his prime, and such he remained in health and strength to his last illness, only that in his latest years his physical vigor was somewhat diminished, his manner of speaking grew even more reserved and deliberate, and his full beard and thinning hair became tinged with gray.

But let me revert to the course in Hebrew. Dr. Davis's method of conducting it was characteristically his own; and let me hasten to add, it was a method that may be regarded, as indeed it commonly was, as well-nigh perfect. I recall how, when I was a student at Princeton College, one of the classical professors, learning that I was about to enter the Seminary, took occasion to assure me that of all the teachers of language he was ever personally acquainted with, Dr. Davis was the most efficient and successful. It was an extraordinary commendation, coming as it did from an acknowledged master in a similar field of instruction. Students are not always competent judges in such matters, but it gives me pleasure to record that there were many besides myself in the class—and what was true of this class was, I am confident, true of others taking this course—who felt constrained to say for themselves precisely what this teacher of Greek had expressed as his deliberate judgment.

In its external features the system was simplicity itself. The student was referred to the textbook, Dr. Green's *Grammar*, for such things as declensions, conjugations, and those set forms which have to be mastered at one time or another by dint of sheer memorizing; but with a minimum of what may be called the tactics of the drillmaster, the professor dictated the essentials of the daily exercises with a lucidity and conciseness, and with an economy of technique, that were truly remarkable. As day by day the class was led by the well-considered stages—I had almost said the easy steps—of this process of analyzing, classifying, illustrating, and fixing in the mind the basal facts of Hebrew grammar, syntax, and word formations, the conviction was borne in upon us that our guide was indeed an expert in the art of applying common sense to language study. He never allowed his learning to add to the difficulties inherent in the thing to be learned. He would occasionally illumine a Hebrew idiom by calling to his aid a general principle of comparative philology, but there were no embarrassing riches of that sort thrust upon us. He knew his subject; but he also knew how to impart his knowledge of it. He was a complete stranger to what in such instruction, as in most other fields of pedagogy, is probably the commonest and deadliest vice, that *multiloquium* that obscures the main points in a discussion with a fuliginous verbosity over recondite but altogether irrelevant considerations. Hebraist that he was, he had a Hellenic sense of proportion, putting first things first, and treating others according to their due importance: his rules were rules and his exceptions were exceptions. It was not strange, therefore, that he kindled in many members of the class a veritable enthusiasm for the study of Hebrew, and that he enabled even average students to participate in the work with a delightful sense of intellectual achievement and progress, as they followed his lead into that realm of strange, non-Aryan linguistic phenomena which open to view the fascinating world of Semitic thought and life.

Nor may I neglect the moral and spiritual values of this

course. No doubt, there was in it, as in all work of that kind, a necessary element of what may be called drudgery. But the very routine became, in the presence of this man of God, a means of grace to his pupils, a test of their characters, a constant aid in the deepening of their devotion to the high calling for which they realized he was preparing them. He would admit that many of the facts with which as beginners in Hebrew we had to deal were dry and uninviting, but he made us see that the language of Scripture is the very skeleton of revealed truth,—bare, bleached, hard, and repellent, it may be,—but so fundamental that there can be no manifestation of life or activity without it, much less any grace of motion or beauty of form; and he convinced us that like beginners in anatomy we were not to grudge spending a few months inspecting and handling the bony specimens, in order that in due time each one of them might become, as it were, our dear familiar. Of discipline in the ordinary sense there was, accordingly, scarcely any need. His high and serious temper, the sheer weight and insistence of his personality, were a sufficient admonition and rebuke for the indolent, the careless, and the indifferent; and for all, an unfailing incentive to a more rigorous fidelity. Never harsh or unkind, he bore patiently with any who might be afflicted with natural dulness or incapacity. If, as sometimes happened, the daily pensus was too heavy, he would make amends in the next assignment, gladly conceding that even with theological students engaged in the study of Hebrew there may be occasion to remember the text: "Even the youths shall faint and be weary." So he won our permanent regard, not by seeking popularity through indulgent and easy-going methods, but by meriting a place for himself in that small but elect class of great preceptors who command our enduring admiration and gratitude, because they give us arduous tasks worthy of our best endeavors, discover to us our resources and potentialities, and ever appeal to our highest aspirations. Let me repeat my testimony that, taking one thing with another, Dr. Davis was

the best teacher of language under whom it has been my privilege to study.

The second course which our class had with Dr. Davis was that in Old Testament History. I have often thought that of all his classroom work this was the part which he himself liked best, and from which the general run of his students—there were, indeed, exceptions—derived most benefit.

The instruction was carried on by a method admirably adapted to his purpose as a scientific teacher of sacred history. Doubtless, had he selected a good manual for the class, he might have covered more ground, imparted more information of a systematic sort, and secured for the course as a whole a more rounded and finished form, as well as a fuller presentation of the doctrinal implications of the subject. But his aim was not that of a Sunday school teacher content to tabulate the more obvious biblical facts and to impress the pupil with their religious significance. Dealing, as he did, with college graduates, many of whom came to the study of the Bible under the influence of those widely prevalent schools of textual and historical criticism which eliminate from the inspired record every element of the supernatural, he sought, by means of an intensive but constructive study of the sources of Jewish history, both native and foreign, to validate the essential content of the traditional Christian conception of the origin and development of the religion of Israel. And this he undertook, not by delivering set lectures giving the processes and results of his own research, but by guiding the class in the exercise of making its own inductive survey of the Scriptural data, and by supplementing this material with his special contributions from contemporary non-biblical sources. Assuredly, there was nothing cut and dried in the untrammelled but well-directed give and take of the discussions in this classroom. "Cudgel your brains," he was wont to say to us, as we wrestled with some of the problems that have to be faced in this field; and many Juniors, I dare say, got more intellectual thrills out of their repeated endeavors to do a bit of honest, straightforward, independent

thinking in this course, than they did out of any other scholastic activity of their Seminary days. Many a graduate, I am confident, looks back to this classroom as the memorable place where, so to say, he ventured for the first time, seated all by himself in his own little theological Ford, to turn on the ignition switch, get his cerebral motor briskly revolving, take the shift-lever of his thinking-gear out of its long resting place in neutral, and then confidently, with the true zest of adventure, go forth on his maiden trip out into the great open spaces, across the broad, fertile valleys, and up the picturesque mountain heights of Old Testament history. I emphasize this feature of Dr. Davis's pedagogy, because I regard it as revealing one of his outstanding merits as a teacher. He was deeply concerned to have us learn to think for ourselves. He inspired us to develop self-reliance in meeting the varied problems of archaeology, chronology, and geography, as these emerge from the sources of primitive history. He would not tolerate our regarding him as an oracle whose *ipse dixit* is the end of all controversy. He had the true teacher's belief that it is a genuine kindness to students to spare them no requirement of their intellectual manhood, but so to train them in sound methods of research, in powers of judgment, and in scholarly temper, that they can for themselves determine the real state of a question, balance opposing considerations, and discriminate between the certain and the hypothetical, between brilliant but fallacious speculations and those convincing arguments that yield sound knowledge. He thus gave us so thorough an understanding of the aims, methods, and characteristics of Hebrew historiography, that we could intelligently apply for ourselves the principles of a valid biblical criticism against the reconstructionists of the divisive school of Wellhausen.

But I must say a word about his personal attitude toward debatable questions. No doubt, there were those in every class taking this course who regarded him as being far too reluctant to commit himself to what they fancied was the only possible, or at least the only safe conclusion for a believer in

supernatural revelation. Some probably even thought him deficient in sincerity, candor, and courage. They felt that even his most guarded statements could be interpreted in the direction of a too concessive apologetic. As for myself, I must freely acknowledge that I was sometimes disappointed when, in his replies to questions that puzzled us, he paid what I thought was an undue deference to the dictum, "Brevity is the soul of wit." There were moments when his laconic "Perhaps" or "Possibly so" rather mystified us. Nor were we always satisfied that he needed to be quite so eager, when discussing Old Testament miracles, to try to buttress our faith by an underpinning of considerations taken from the general order of the divine providence. But on the other hand, it is my more mature judgment that a true historical-mindedness justified our teacher in his oft-repeated representation that even at this late day many questions in this field of ancient history must be left open; that the evidence pro or con is not conclusive; that we must wait for further light. And as regards his ethical attributes as a teacher, what impressed me much more than his occasional Hamlet-like irresolution were his downright honesty; his candor and boldness in thrusting upon us the difficulties which historical scholarship in this department dare not evade; his utter unwillingness to substitute declamation for argument, or to use any subterfuge against his opponents in the camp of rationalistic critics; and above all, his serene confidence in the truthfulness and the trustworthiness of the sacred history—his reverent loyalty to the Bible as the Word of God. "If we had never learned it before," says one of his former students, "we learned there what absolute fair-mindedness is." And another writes to the same effect: "But the man who got deepest into my life"—he is referring to the members of the Faculty in his day—"above all, because of his evident sincerity and transparent honesty, was Dr. Davis. I could not but respect him for his accurate and profound scholarship, but I loved him for his fair-mindedness." These testimonies, I feel confident, reflect the sentiment of the

great majority of those who studied Old Testament history under Dr. Davis.

But it was in the Senior year course on the exegesis of the prophets that we found the crown of the professor's work in the classroom. Time will permit only a brief reference to some of the salient features of this instruction. Here, too, the method was of prime importance. He was less concerned to familiarize us with the contents of a book taken as a whole, or to have us relate its teachings to the general system of Christian doctrine, than he was to ground us in right principles of interpretation, and thus to inspire us to cultivate worthy habits of Bible study. He therefore concentrated the class exercises upon a limited number of those great cardinal passages in the major and minor prophets that have specially challenged the attention of commentators throughout the history of the Church. To stimulate that independence of thought and effort which alone can make of a pupil something of a scholar, he assigned to different groups the task of preparing for discussion brief digests of the opinions of typical expositors on the problems involved in the given section—such general matters as the nature of inspired prophecy, the historical situation of the author, his purpose in writing; and the specific questions pertaining to textual and historical criticism, the exact meaning of controverted terms, the merits and defects of some of the representative interpretations, and the like. These diverse and often contradictory views thus submitted by the members of the class were supplemented by others which the professor cited from his extensive notes or from his capacious memory, and then this whole mass of material was critically sifted, classified, and discussed from every legitimate standpoint. It was an instructive object lesson in scientific, historico-grammatical exegesis; an impressive illustration of the way in which an accomplished biblical scholar uses his tools and does his work.

But the mere technique of the method can give no adequate idea of the skill and success with which Dr. Davis employed it. Here, too, the personality of the teacher—his intellectual

and moral qualities—must be taken into the account. Calm, cautious, unhurried, dispassionate, open-minded, ever ready to give due weight to any relevant consideration, he brought to his exegetical labors not only a solid erudition in Semitic scholarship and biblical learning, but also the resources of a mind thoroughly trained for historical research; a fine linguistic tact; a meticulous accuracy of statement; keen spiritual discernment; a sober, judicial temper that could make no concessions either to the arbitrary extravagances of a rationalistic expositor or to the equally unwarranted dogmatism of an over-zealous orthodoxy; a broad, catholic sympathy with all lovers of evangelical truth; and an overmastering sense of the unique character of Holy Scripture as a God-given message of redemption.

No doubt, there were some in every class who found this method of instruction more noble in its conception than attractive and fruitful in its execution. And unquestionably, the scholarly ideal here set before them was high and difficult of attainment. The work required in collating and evaluating the divergent views that are so plentifully to be found in the proverbially dry-as-dust critical commentaries is so laborious, that it is by no means strange that some students gave up all hope of ever being able to pattern their future Bible study after this model. They longed for more of that sort of exegesis in which the teacher gives a maximum of the kind of material which the student can put to sermonic uses with a minimum of creative effort. It may be admitted, too, that the results with which Dr. Davis had at times to content himself were rather fragmentary and meagre; that the exigencies of the discussion ever and again left important issues at loose ends. But most of us felt that the professor's pedagogy was a valid illustration of the truism: "He who aims highest may not hit the mark, but he will strike higher than one who aims lower." And certainly his very thoroughness made us realize that his interpretation of a difficult passage, or his conclusion on a controverted point, had an antecedent presumption of being the best attainable. Most of us, too, were quite prepared

to admit that it is no part of the duty of a professor of exegetical theology to drop ready-made loaves into the ever empty bread-boxes of those members of the class who have to grapple with the weekly problem of finding the necessary wherewithal for their more or less impromptu homiletic distribution of the staff of life to finicky, but not very hungry, Sunday morning congregations in self-complacent little country churches. I feel confident that I speak for most of my fellow students when I say that we regarded this course as something akin to the very glorification of philology—the love of words giving place to a love of the Word, a love so deep and strong that it deemed no amount of time or toil spent on the sacred oracles too costly an offering to be made by one who would enter into the innermost sanctuary of revealed truth.

I cannot speak from personal knowledge in regard to the many other courses, some of them required and others optional, which Dr. Davis conducted during his long years of service in the Seminary. Nor, in view of all that has now been said of his prescribed work in this department, need we give further consideration to these aspects of his ministry. Suffice it to say that the elective classes which from time to time he organized gave students ample opportunity to enrich their knowledge of the Old Testament under the guidance of this expert scholar and efficient teacher. Graduate students in particular welcomed these privileges, and spoke in the highest terms of the benefits received from this more advanced instruction.

As we survey the scope and quality of this varied work in the classroom, we gratefully acknowledge that Dr. Davis has rendered a service to this institution and to the Church at large which merits the most generous recognition. He has, indeed, honored the teacher's calling by his ability, his industry, his fidelity, his success, and most of all by the graces of his ripe Christian character. The academic profession may claim him as a conspicuous example of its highest virtues. And in particular, as an heir of the noblest tradition of this

school of sacred learning, its loyalty to the primary and authentic forms of the Word of God, he has worthily maintained that succession of great teachers in his department who have illustrated and vindicated the highest and best use to which the study of the Hebrew language and the literature of the Old Testament can be consecrated. He believed in the value and the feasibility of giving candidates for the Gospel ministry a thorough first-hand acquaintance with the Bible. He was in hearty sympathy with the work of his colleagues in the practical departments and always gave generous recognition to its claims. But he had no fear that even the most zealous students would endanger their future usefulness by any excess of devotion to the basal problems of biblical history and exegetical science. There were, indeed, some in every class to whom his gifts and powers made but a slight appeal; they were largely men who failed to appreciate his aims and methods because of their inadequate preliminary training or because of their inability to profit from courses which in the nature of the case belong to the most technical studies in a seminary curriculum. But the great majority of his students recognized him as a teacher whose efficiency and success made a weighty contribution to the prestige of Princeton as a centre of theological education. And if we would fairly estimate the service of this incumbent of what is often regarded by competent judges as the highest and most widely influential office on earth, that of the professor engaged in preparing men for the Gospel ministry, we must know him, not simply in the seclusion of his study or at his desk before a class, but in the lives of those who have sat under him, who have caught something of his spirit, and who will never cease to cherish his memory because of the vital and effective ways in which he impressed himself on their minds and hearts. If I might venture to put into a single sentence my appreciation of Dr. Davis as a teacher, I should say that, in an era of profound theological upheaval and widespread religious doubt and uncertainty, he achieved a remarkable success in guiding his students through the per-

plexities and perils of a thoroughly scientific investigation and critical discussion of the literature of the Old Testament, and making their personal Christian faith emerge from the necessary ordeal, purified, indeed, by suffering, but likewise strengthened by the sacrificial toil, confirmed and perfected through an ampler and surer knowledge of its impregnable historic foundations in the law and the prophecies of ancient Israel. Let me conclude what I have to say on this part of my theme by quoting a typical testimony from a former student: "To those of us who had the blessing of knowing him, he has given an inspiration which is a constantly enriching experience. In the classroom he did more than any other man to make the Bible a living book, and to help me to a sane interpretation of the divine and human factors in its composition. But he did infinitely more for me by what he was. As sincerely as I can express myself, he interpreted by his own life the true spirit of Christ. When I think of his work, the words have been coming to me ever since my Seminary days: 'Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth'."

A man may be a conspicuously successful teacher without being a fruitful writer; but it adds greatly to his prestige in the classroom, if his students know that he is a recognized authority in his field of instruction. Now it is emphatically to this latter class that we must assign Dr. Davis as a theological professor. He gave evidence, early, continued, and abundant, of his ability to produce work of standard merit in the realm of Old Testament scholarship. His literary output is, indeed, less extensive than that of some of his distinguished predecessors in his chair, but in its unique combination of scientific excellence and wide popular usefulness, it compares favorably with the publications that have done most to establish and maintain the authoritative position of this department in the world of Hebrew and Semitic learning.

It was in 1894 that his first book appeared, a small octavo

volume of 150 pages, bearing the title *Genesis and Semitic Tradition*. It embodied the results of years of laborious research among those freshly unearthed documents, written in cuneiform characters, which attest that the ancient peoples on the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates "had accounts of the early ages which told the same story as the Hebrew narratives or showed common conceptions with them."

The author's purpose is neither apologetic nor expository but critical. Recognizing that these newly discovered writings establish the antiquity of the traditions in the first chapters of Genesis, and not only so, but that the former contribute important details for a right understanding of the latter and illumine many terms which before were obscure or ambiguous, he sifts what is genuine and valuable in this material from its worthless accretions; corrects the many mistranslations which were "due in part to the infancy of the science of Assyriology and in part to undue haste," but which had given rise to widely current yet utterly misleading conclusions as to the extent to which the Hebrew record may have been indebted to Babylonian antecedents; and finally undertakes an orderly and detailed evaluation of the legitimate data. These tasks are accomplished with a skill and thoroughness that reveal the author's rare critical acumen and sagacity, his characteristically patient and determined precision of method, and that fine, scholarly restraint, caution, and fairness that distinguish all his work as a scientific historian. He successfully avoids the faults that have commonly marred the use of these difficult, often illegible and unintelligible sources, especially by popular but inadequately equipped writers: the acceptance, on the one hand, of only those portions that accommodate themselves most readily to an easy but unsafe biblical apologetic; and the perversion, on the other, of such passages as are deemed prejudicial to the inspired narrative. Time and again he warns against rash inductions, and insists upon the necessity of suspending judgment and waiting for more light. "It is regretted," he says, "that on several topics negative results only can be

obtained; but patience with negative results and the quiet tarrying by the argument for and against are better than haste."

The opening chapter on "The Creation of the Universe," originally published in *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, is particularly valuable as a quite conclusive discussion of the relation of the cuneiform and the biblical narratives on this subject. Suggestive in its boldness, if not altogether satisfactory in its argumentation, is the chapter on "The Help Meet for Man." The author inclines, indeed, to the view that the biblical account of the creation of Eve records a real event; but he reveals no little sympathy with the alternative theory that the narrative may be only another of the many instances, familiar alike in Babylonian tradition and in sacred history, in which visions are used for the inculcation of truth in symbolic form. In discussing the Deluge, the writer indulges in a clever bit of strategy at the expense of the divisive critics of Genesis, by showing from the cuneiform records themselves that difference in style is no sure proof of diversity of authorship. But time forbids my going into further detail. Only a careful perusal of the volume will give any adequate idea of "the admirable combination of conservatism and liberality" with which Dr. Davis handles the difficult questions which the first chapters of the Bible have always raised for exegetical theologians, questions which have been lifted to a higher level of importance than ever by the recent discovery of these celebrated tablets and by the confident claims made in behalf of the evolutionary hypothesis. The book does much credit to American scholarship. It still deserves, more than thirty years after its publication, to be consulted by all students of the Bible; and it may be heartily recommended to any who, disturbed by present-day discussions as to the relation of theology to other sciences, desire confirmation of their faith in the trustworthiness of the Scriptural narrative of creation and of the early history of the race.

The most important and by far the best known of Dr.

Davis's works, the *magnum opus* which will transmit alike the benefits and the fame of his biblical scholarship to coming generations, is his justly celebrated *Dictionary of the Bible With Many New and Original Maps and Plans and Amply Illustrated*. It made its first appearance in 1898, an octavo volume of 802 pages. A second edition, with more maps and considerable new archaeological material, was issued in 1903 and reprinted in 1907. The third edition, a thorough revision of the work, with many articles recast and enlarged, and others added, was published in 1911, and reprinted eight times in the next twelve years. The fourth and final edition was issued in November, 1924, and reprinted in June 1925, bringing the total number of copies made to about 50,000. The sales have covered not only the United States but also the British Isles. A few weeks before the author's death, permission was given to a special commission in Latin America to translate the book into Portuguese.

These facts amply substantiate the claim alike of the publishers and of many scholarly experts and hosts of general readers that this is the best one-volume dictionary of the Bible in the English language. The objective characterization of the work by the author himself may fittingly be quoted :

The book aims to be a dictionary of the Bible, not of speculation about the Bible. It seeks to furnish a thorough acquaintance with things biblical. To this end it has been made a compendium of the facts stated in the Scriptures, and of explanatory and supplementary material drawn from the records of the ancient peoples contemporary with Israel; it has been adequately furnished with authoritative illustrations, not pictures drawn from the imagination, but actual delineations of the very things themselves; and it has been fully equipped with maps, all recent, and most of them drawn specially for this work from the latest authorities.

Dr. Davis's style, it may be said, is well suited to the requirements of an encyclopaedic treatise. It is clear, terse, direct, with scarcely a superfluous word in 840 pages. One knows not, indeed, which to admire the more, the amount of solid learning he has stored in this volume, or the lucidity and thoroughness with which every major subject is treated. Permit me to quote from the best appraisal of the work I

have ever seen, that of the author's colleague, the late Dr. William Henry Green:

The charm of the whole is the accuracy of the statements and the candor and fairness manifested in dealing with disputed points. While there is no parade of learning, the results of the latest and best scholarship are everywhere presented. It may be accepted with confidence as embodying the fruits of the most recent and reliable researches and the utmost that is known of the subjects treated. In matters that are at present in dispute among scholars this fact is frankly stated, the arguments urged on different sides of the question at issue are candidly and succinctly exhibited, and the opinion of the author as to the state of the controversy is honestly given. Those who hold a different opinion will not agree with his conclusions, but no objection can be made to his method or to the fairness with which he states the opinions which he opposes. His position is throughout conservative. There is no obstinate adherence to the old simply because it is old, when it can no longer be honestly defended. But on the other hand, there is no chasing after novelties, however plausible, simply because they are new; no impatience of old-established views, which have stood the test of ages, and which are as valid now as ever. A reverent and believing attitude is maintained toward Holy Scripture. Its declarations are accepted as true. Its books are accepted as the products of the men whose names they bear. The sacred history is not reconstructed in accordance with modern revolutionary speculations; but its truth is vindicated in a manner to show that the author's faith is no weak irrational credulity, but a conviction resting on solid and intelligible grounds.

I have made this extended citation not simply because it gives us an authoritative judgment concerning Dr. Davis's most widely influential publication, but more especially also because it will help us toward a final estimate of his critical attitude in general and his whole scholarly achievement. For what is here said of the *Dictionary* is equally true of the author's other writings: his numerous articles and book notices in *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review* and *The Princeton Theological Review*; his "Critical Notes" in *The Westminster Teacher* (1899-1907); his brief but instructive discussions in *The Bible Student*, mainly on points of archaeology and ancient history; and his notable essay on "Persian Words and the Date of Old Testament Documents," contributed to *Old Testament and Semitic Studies in Memory of William Rainey Harper* (1908). In these occasional productions are garnered many of the choicest fruits of his

lifelong devotion to the cause of biblical learning. I have given myself the satisfaction, in preparing this address, of refreshing my memory in regard to their number, range, and content. I closed my survey of them with the conviction that in the aggregate they exhibit even more impressively than do his books those two traits of his scholarship which Dr. Green has particularly emphasized in the statement quoted—his masterful thoroughness and his judicial temper. The author everywhere reveals those superb qualifications for the scientific investigation and interpretation of the Old Testament which we have found to be characteristic of his instruction in the classroom: his exemplary philological equipment; his intimate acquaintance with the history of Israel and of the contemporary nations; his perfect familiarity with the problems, old and new, which have engaged the attention of specialists in this field; his ready command of the whole apparatus of critical scholarship; his conscientious fidelity in the application of sound hermeneutical principles and methods; his keen powers of analysis; his skill in classifying data, weighing evidence, testing results, and making valid inductions; his freedom from dogmatism and fanciful exegesis; his avoidance alike of barren speculation and hackneyed platitude; his incisive logic and cogency in argument; his power of clear definition and precise and succinct statement; his sobriety in judgment and his willingness in every doubtful case to wait for further light; his honesty and candor; his manly independence and courage in defending his positions both against popular dislikes and against scholarly attacks; his scrupulous fairness and chivalrous courtesy to his opponents; his love of truth, his robust confidence in the sacred text, and his sympathetic appreciation of the transcendent worth of Holy Scripture as the very Word of God.

And it is in the light of these gifts and accomplishments, so long and so conspicuously manifested in his teaching and in his writing, that we can form a true estimate of what many will regard as the most valuable part of his service to the

cause of truth—his defence of “the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints.” Here, too, he worthily maintained the noble traditions of his chair. Like his predecessors, he stood for the authenticity, integrity, and trustworthiness of the Old Testament, believing and abundantly proving that the claims which the books make for themselves explain the phenomena to be accounted for, better than does any other view of their origin and nature. Like his predecessors, he accepted that Augustinian-Calvinistic system of doctrine which, broad-based on the evangelicalism of inspired prophet and apostle, lifts its massive greatness to the eternal dwelling place of the Most High,—a majestic mountain, on whose mighty slopes and wide table-lands, everywhere watered by the river of life that proceedeth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, repose those green fields in which the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls sustains and refreshes his flock. Like his predecessors, he let his moderation be known of all men, but without ever wavering in his loyalty to the truth; and studied the peace and prosperity of the Church, but without any compromise between her well-established faith and those brilliant but barren speculations that have tried to sap her very foundations. Like his predecessors, he never feared genuine progress in biblical learning, but always opposed that theological bolshevism that ignores or rejects the assured results of centuries of Christian experience and scientific apologetics. Like his predecessors, he recognized that in our better understanding of oriental modes of thought, in our fuller knowledge of Jewish and other ancient history, and in our richer possession of the promised gifts of the Holy Spirit, there is room for the hope that the Church will enjoy an increasingly complete occupation of her God-given heritage. But he, too, was thoroughly conservative in his views of the Old Testament canon, both as to the time when it was made and as to the principles that determined its formation; in his conception of the nature of the law and the mission of the prophets; and in his use of the textual and higher criticism. He believed in the necessity,

legitimacy, and value of the most painstaking investigation of the sacred literature, and welcomed light from whatever source it might come, being confident that the issue would only vindicate the claims which the Bible makes for itself. But he was convinced that the arguments of the divisive analysts were in the main fallacious and their results extremely dubious. And by his own constructive use of the valid criteria he not only helped in the solution of many specific problems as to the dates and authorship of individual books, but reinforced the whole school of conservative criticism to which he belonged. By his own example he time and again showed that the highest attainments in biblical science have no necessary connection with rationalistic tendencies and conclusions. He neither ignored nor minimized the importance of the hypotheses which a naturalistic philosophy had made the current orthodoxy in the camp of his opponents. But with the keen weapons of his exact scholarship he met his antagonists on their own ground, and not only refuted their views but established the validity and credibility of his own.

Thus it has come to pass that this quiet student, by his long life of habitual and intimate communion with the master minds, ancient and modern, in the realm of biblical criticism, archaeology, history, and exegesis, has placed the whole Church under obligation to himself by confirming her confidence in her divinely given constitution. If he seldom appeared in public discussions, he never failed, when he did speak, to interest and instruct his hearers. Who that heard his address in yonder Alexander Hall a few years ago can forget the profound impression he made upon that academic audience by his scholarly exposition of the biblical account of creation? It was a striking illustration of the fact, familiar enough to his own students, and often gratefully acknowledged by them, that in these times of stress and strain, when the scientific world is distraught by its very achievements and bewildered by its own disintegration, when knowledge, indeed, is exalted but wisdom is despised, he knew how to

speak words of soberness and strength in behalf of the truth enshrined in the Book of books. If his exegetical findings occasionally show indecision, it is because the indecision is warranted by the evidence. If they are not always brought into intimate correspondence with systematic theology, this is not due to any unwillingness or inability on his part to appreciate the importance of this science, but rather to the fact that his work as an interpreter was primarily historical and not dogmatic. He preferred to take single, isolated passages and, as it were, smite them with the javelin of his penetrating exegesis, that the light might play upon every minute fragment. And if he added relatively little that was new, he did much to conserve and commend the knowledge bequeathed to us from the past. I have said that in the ordinary sense of the word he was no churchman; but in a larger sense he was a true and faithful servant of the Church Universal, a defender and promoter of her most cherished interests. His publications are more than a guide for the perplexed: they are a shield for faith, an arsenal for the unarmed, a storehouse of biblical scholarship and spiritual wisdom fitted to sustain and comfort all those who, whatever be their ecclesiastical affiliations, still believe in the written and the Incarnate Word of God.

His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal;
Nor number, nor example with him wrought
To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind
Though single.

I fear I may be taking more time than custom allows for an address of this kind, but I should be falling utterly short of the proprieties of the occasion, if I failed to supplement, however briefly, the few incidental references I have made to the character of our departed friend. For after all, the man himself was greater than any expression of himself by voice or pen. Let us, therefore, in conclusion, look for a moment a little more closely at his personality, a little more deeply into his inner life.

And perhaps the most obvious remark for me to make in this connection is likewise the most significant: though I have known Dr. Davis for thirty years, and for most of this period had the kind of association with him that goes with membership in a small faculty, I cannot say that I have known him well. And I surmise that all my colleagues without exception would bear the same testimony. He had, indeed, few intimates. He loved to live and toil in solitude. His "soul was like a star, and dwelt apart." You often saw him walking alone, but seldom with others. He was no clubman. Golf had no lure for him. He held himself aloof from cliques and parties, and in manly independence chose his own way. His classroom, his home, his Bible—these, I take it, were, so to say, the outer and inner courts and the holy of holies in the sanctuary of his life.

He was pre-eminently a domestic man; his pleasures were those of his own fireside. Nor could any parent be more solicitous for his children's welfare, or more self-sacrificing in their behalf. He had two sons and four daughters, and it was his custom, as each child grew up, to spend Sunday afternoon reading to him or her, as the case might be, or to several together: surely to them this memory will abide as one of their most sacred and precious possessions, as for every Christian observer the sight itself is one than which this world has nothing more beautiful to offer—a great biblical scholar in fatherly love and tenderness seeking to lead little ones, his very own, into wisdom's ways of pleasantness and peace.

But for most of us, I repeat, his habitual reserve was seldom laid aside. His taciturnity was at times fairly bewildering. He could sit at a faculty meeting for more than an hour without uttering a solitary word, though he was the senior professor, and most of the little group were former pupils of his. He was one of the most self-suppressing men I have ever known. And yet he was naturally cheerful, good-natured, and of an ardent temperament, capable of cherishing and expressing strong emotions. He was always ready

enough to hear what you might have to say, and ever and again his genial smile would give proof of the marked benevolence of his disposition. But he could be strangely objective and unreciprocative. If he cared for you, you could infer the fact from his way of treating you, but you would listen in vain for any verbal assurance. Capable of admiration but chary of praise, he was quick to recognize merit in a student, colleague, or friend, but if he deigned to compliment you, there was likely to be something about his bantering manner that would make you feel that perhaps after all you were missing the correct exegesis of his words of commendation: at any rate, you would not be unduly puffed up. Considerate and courteous as he was, he could, by way of exception, when his feelings were deeply stirred, be blunt and brusque with a caustic severity. In general, I should say that his *fortiter in re* was unequally yoked with his *suaviter in modo*. Like most positive natures, he had great decision of character, with likes and dislikes which you might argue against but could not modify. He was swift to detect sinister motives, and though he might not care to say much about his discovery, you instinctively felt that he had valid reasons for his caution. On the other hand, his generous sympathies often led him to say a good word for one whom others might regard as quite hopelessly delinquent. I have repeatedly referred to his noble candor, that serene radiance that springs from an altar-fire within, from a heart glowing with the love of truth. Nor need I say more of his single-eyed devotion to his task. He literally rejoiced to be faithful; early in life he entered into the secret of true fidelity: "Duty by habit is to pleasure turned." Modest, unpretentious, free from any airs of superiority, a hater of shams, duplicities, and all the arts of indirection, he seems to have been a perfect stranger to those foibles and infirmities that so often mar even clerical manners and morals—vanity, pride, jealousy, uncharitableness, censoriousness, inordinate ambition, lust of power and prominence. Never in thirty years did I hear him express a word of envy or malice. I have known teachers who have

had a stronger hold on the affections of their students, and some who have called forth more intense admiration, but few, if indeed any, who by sheer force of personality and weight of character have commanded more profound respect and veneration. And in these more recent years it has been his gentleness, his almost feminine tenderness, his meekness, his goodwill, his noble tolerance, his broad humanity, his long-suffering and never failing charity that have endeared him to us, making us mingle affection with our esteem and reverence.

But it was in his religious life, his simple, fervent, unostentatious piety, that Dr. Davis most fully revealed himself. He was in such intimate and constant communion with the Prophets and Psalmists of Israel, with the Apostles of the New Covenant, and with that Redeemer in whom and for whom he lived, that the great truths of Holy Scripture became part and parcel of his inmost being; those truths that are the formative principles of a strong and beautiful Christian character, that stir the profoundest emotions in the believer's heart and inspire his best endeavors, that keep aflame the spirit of worship, love, and service, and yield their fruit unto holiness.

He was thoroughly churchly in his religion. He delighted in the appointed ordinances of the house of God and loved his place in the sanctuary. He cared little for ecclesiastical novelties, whether they pertained to forms of worship or methods of work. A convinced Presbyterian in doctrine and polity, he rejoiced in the type of faith and life with which the sisterhood of Reformed Churches have blessed the world. But he felt that Christians can well afford to differ on many minor points, and that, as they have done so in the past, they probably always will. He was no narrow theological partisan. He had no zeal for controversy, but thought that training the children of the kingdom in sound biblical learning was better for them and for the kingdom than was the promotion of strife among brethren. His churchmanship had primarily to do with the basal linguistic facts of revealed truth, and it

was impossible for him to be a mere sectarian; for, as Dr. Patton some years ago reminded us, "There is nothing denominational about the 'apocopated future' or the 'vav converse'."

Dr. Davis's preaching was just as unconventional as were his classroom methods. There was such a studied simplicity about his homiletic art that it would scarcely occur to you to regard him as a learned man in the eminent sense of the word. There was nothing professorial or professional about his pulpit ministrations. Whether he read from a manuscript or, as he sometimes did, spoke from brief notes, he hardly ever touched upon the speculative phases of his subject, but ordinarily contented himself with a few practical reflections on his text. Addressing himself chiefly to the conscience and will of his hearers, he commonly selected themes that suggested an ethical rather than a dogmatic development. Caring little for rhetorical color and embellishment, and likewise for mere exegetical subtleties, he spoke with great plainness and directness to sinner and saint. He nearly always produced an impression of marked solemnity and, frequently, when under the power of emotions that fairly choked his voice and filled his eyes with tears, he exercised an oratorical power that swayed his audience like a wind-swept field of grain. At its best, his preaching was something like a Hebrew prophet's message combining stern admonition with tender appeal, well fitted to pierce and purge the conscience and to stimulate duty, by giving some fresh glimpse of the ineffable glory of the God of our salvation.

In his religious life as a whole, the outstanding trait was his profound humility, perhaps the most distinctively Christian grace in the entire garniture with which the sanctifying Spirit invests the renewed mind. It was this characteristic above all others that appeared in his public prayers,—his expressions of adoration, penitence, thanksgiving, and child-like faith,—as in unhackneyed speech, in language breathing the refreshing atmosphere of the inspired Word, he spoke to God out of the fulness of a heart that knew well its own sin

and misery and need. The poet Heine has given us a criticism of the mere philologist that is final: he knows many tongues, but he knows not the language of the stars. But Dr. Davis was no mere philologist. In his early youth the heavenly tidings had come to him, and all through his life they kept coming in fulness, power, and blessed assurance, humbling him, indeed, before the throne of the divine majesty, as the marvel of redeeming grace ever humbles the true child of God, ere in turn it lifts him in fervent worship to the very presence-chamber of the Most High.

I close as I began. We cannot but mourn our heavy loss; but our very grief pleads with us to thank God for that goodness and grace that endowed this servant of his with such rare gifts of mind and heart, and prospered him so abundantly in his high vocation, and made him a source of such great blessings to this Seminary and to the whole Church. We count him happy in the length of his years, in the measure of his services, and in the beneficent issues of his noble career. It was such a life as a scholar would wish for himself, and now that it has been made perfect in death, we who knew and loved him rejoice most of all in this, that he who so well deserved and so modestly bore his wreath of academic laurels has now been deemed worthy, as a sinner saved by grace, to receive that highest coronation of the human spirit, the crown of life that fadeth not away. There was a phrase which we students often heard fall from the lips of our late teacher—I have referred to it more than once: "We must wait for further light." It is our confident faith that our departed friend, now blessed with the beatific vision of the glory of the Lord, has his heart's desire in the fulness of that light that never was on sea or land save in the Life that is the light of all worlds. We would not grudge him his home-going. But as we thank God for the life and work of John D. Davis, let us with renewed earnestness and fidelity dedicate ourselves to the task of knowing and making known that same truth of God which he so deeply loved, so faithfully taught, and so nobly defended. We may never

be able rightly to appraise the greatness of this heritage; but
at least

We have a voice with which to pay the debt
Of boundless love and reverence and regret
To those great men who fought, and kept it ours:—
And keep it ours, O God!

Princeton.

FREDERICK W. LOETSCHER.