

# THE PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL REVIEW.

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## I.

### OUR LORD'S TEACHING CONCERNING HIMSELF.

**T**HIS is a subject of fundamental importance, the subject which underlies and determines every other portion of our Lord's teaching—His teaching concerning God and concerning man. For if we admit His claims in regard to Himself, we know that through Him alone we can come to the knowledge of the Father, and that by Him man's place and character and destiny are determined.

Moreover, it is a unique subject. The theme is identical with the Teacher. This is unparalleled. A true teacher keeps himself in the background. Whenever he refers to himself, it is as to one who is himself a disciple, and whose place is always subordinate to the truth to which he bears witness. But our Lord identifies Truth with His own Person. He makes Himself the supreme Subject of His teaching and the sole medium through whom Divine Truth can be revealed or apprehended. His words were, as the disciples recognized, "the words of Eternal Life"—not merely promises of life, but vehicles of life, for in them His life energizes and quickens those who receive them. As Hort says:

"His *ρήματα* were so completely parts and utterances of Himself, that they had no meaning as abstract statements of truth uttered by Him as a Divine oracle or prophet. Take away Himself as the primary (though not the ultimate) subject of every statement and they all fall to pieces."\*

The self-assertion which would be a mark of weakness and egotism in other men, in the man Christ Jesus impresses us with reverence

\* Hort: *The Way, the Truth and the Life*, p. 207.

## VII.

### THE MEMORIAL TABLET TO DR. JAMES C. MOFFAT.\*

MR. PRESIDENT, Ladies and Gentlemen:—Dr. Moffat was my teacher in both Princeton College and Princeton Theological Seminary. His enthusiasm, easily awakened by the subject he was teaching, and the animation of its expression are distinctly remembered, I am sure, by all his students. In the College, as Professor of the Greek Language and Literature, he carried our class through Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*. The great passages in Thucydides he took pains to point out to us; as the account of the Sicilian Expedition, the description of the Plague which raged in Athens and the great funeral oration of Pericles over the dead who fell first in the war. One may not implicitly trust his own memory. But it now seems to me, that the moment, when I became aware that the greatest of Greek Histories contained for me something more than a difficult grammatical construction and an unfamiliar vocabulary, was a moment toward the close of the hour of recitation, when our teacher, with appropriate voice and gesture, translated to the class the passage in Pericles' oration which has been repeated, how many times, at ceremonies like the one which now engages us:

“The sacrifice which they collectively made was individually repaid to them; for they received, each one for himself, a praise which grows not old, and the noblest of all sepulchres. . . . For the whole earth is the sepulchre of famous men. Not only are they commemorated by columns and inscriptions in their own country, but in foreign lands there dwells also an unwritten memorial of them, graven not on stone but in the hearts of men.”

The stone commemorating Dr. Moffat stands in our graveyard. In every land, in the hearts of his students, dwells his unwritten memorial. And to-day we complete the tribute, which Pericles tells us the soldier receives, by an inscription on the wall of the most sacred building of the institution he served so long and faith-

\* Address delivered May 5, 1903, in Miller Chapel, Princeton Theological Seminary, during the annual Commencement, at the unveiling of a mural tablet in memory of the late Prof. James C. Moffat, D.D.

fully and well. I have been asked to present, in behalf of the donors, the mural tablet now unveiled; and in doing so I please myself by saying something about the Chair of Church History in the Seminary and his relation to it.

He was our fifth Professor of Church History and the third to hold the professorship for a considerable period. Dr. James W. Alexander taught the subject for a single year and then returned to the pulpit and pastorate whose work he so deeply loved. Dr. Alexander T. McGill for two years added its duties to those of the Chair of Practical Theology. Neither Dr. James Alexander nor Dr. McGill had the opportunity to impress his individuality on the department. The other predecessors of Dr. Moffat were Samuel Miller and Joseph Addison Alexander. Each of them filled the Chair long enough fully to develop his course of instruction and, in no small measure, to reproduce himself in his lectures and recitations.

Dr. Samuel Miller's extended and admirable courses in Practical Theology, his beautiful character, his courtesy and benignity made a profound impression on all his students. These they loved, and those of them who remain with us still love to recount and eulogize and illustrate by anecdote. Happy the professor who, with gifts and knowledge equal to his intellectual duties, is also able through many years to make his own Christian life and character a guide and inspiration to lofty living and faithful service in the ministry of the Gospel! This happiness was Dr. Miller's. It was so eminently his as relatively to have hidden from us who did not know him the great vigor of his intellect and the exceptional breadth and variety of his attainments. Few men have matured as early as he did. He had just reached manhood when he became the colleague pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of New York. He thus began one of the most brilliant and fruitful careers that adorn the history of the American clergy. His active professional life continued nearly sixty years. Unless that of Charles Hodge be excepted, his literary product is larger than that of any other Princeton writer, and that of no other is so various as his. All of it is marked by adequate and accurate scholarship. All of it appealed successfully to the public to which it was addressed. Much of it was widely influential. And if some of it, because of the subjects it deals with, has to-day only an historical interest, there is not a volume of his works which did not appear at a timely moment to fulfill an important function. One cannot read in these volumes without feeling that he is in communion with a large,

well-balanced, richly endowed and widely interested mind, which had been disciplined by earnest and scholarly study and cultivated by his own communion with the best. Perhaps one does not find in him the distinctively literary spirit, a strong feeling for letters as letters. But the historical spirit is there; the enthusiasm of humanity, the *humani nihil a me alienum puto*, and this, with a profound belief in the supernatural origin and the ultimate triumph of Christianity, he brought to the Chair of Church History.

Joseph Addison Alexander filled the Chair for eight years. Those who knew him well and were competent to form an opinion of him are unanimous in describing him as a great man, a man of genius in acquisition and expression. Those who have read Plutarch's *Lives* are tempted to compare and contrast, to interpret one character by another. For me Dr. Addison Alexander is interpreted by a great man much more widely known—I mean Lord Macaulay. The precocity, the insatiable love of books, the rapid conquest of languages, the literary as distinguished from the philological impulse to acquire them, the strong impulse to experiment in almost every literary form, the early achievement of a strong, nervous, lucid, graceful and characteristic style, the ability to dissect a character, to represent it in living synthesis, and to group characters in their historical setting with a sense of value and perspective, the capacious and retentive memory, the love of concrete fact and distaste for abstract truth, the well-filled treasury of knowledge always at command, the power of eloquent monologue, the caprice which accompanied great intellectual power and manifold attainments and widely varying interests, driving their possessor from this subject to that as if restlessness were inseparable from genius, the delight in children, the charming humor bound to express itself in literary form and rioting in nonsense verse and prose—these were Alexander's as they were Macaulay's. Circumstances made it easy and delightful for Macaulay, when he had matured, to concentrate his powers and acquisitions upon his *History*. Unfortunately, as it seems to me, the development of the Seminary compelled the removal of Addison Alexander from the Chair of History to the newly established Chair of New Testament Exegesis, just when, so far as I can judge, he had come under the sway of the great subject which for eight years he had been teaching. Permit me to repeat a remark I made about him twenty years ago:

“The strong determination of his remarkable mind led him prevailing to regard history as literature. Had he continued in the Chair, he would probably have produced in part, at least, one of the most vivid, graphic and dramatic of Church Histories. It is not too much to say that without unduly taxing his

powers he might have done for any great period of the Church's life what Lord Macaulay has done for the English Revolution."

Under Samuel Miller and Addison Alexander the course of Church History in this Seminary must have exerted on the students a broadening and humanizing influence. In the curriculum of a Theological Seminary each discipline is indebted to the others with which it is coördinated, and each confers benefits on the others. In its totality, the course in the sense of Kant's definition is an organism; that is, a whole of which the several parts are reciprocally means and ends. Each, however, regarded as a science, is unified by a distinctive idea; and each, regarded as a discipline, exerts a distinctive influence. Perhaps, the legitimate and appropriate influence of Church History, as a discipline, cannot be better described than by saying, that it perpetuates and invigorates in the professional school the humane influence of the college of the liberal arts. It presents the supernatural religion as organized and in vital communion with the organized life of the world. It unfolds the dramatic story of the great intellectual, social and political reactions which always have attended and always must attend the contact of the sinful humanity and the redeeming Kingdom of God. It is therefore really a history of civilization from a special point of view, the point of view of the supernatural and, in its idea and destiny, the universal religion. And since religion is the strongest, the most persistent and the most subtle and penetrating of historical forces, the teacher of Christian Church History is engaged in the hard problem of presenting the movement of civilization, and especially of European civilization, in its deepest meaning. Hence Church History is the least special, the most nearly encyclopædic of the disciplines. Certainly, whatever else may be said of it, it should be humanizing; and its ideal, I do not say its actual, teacher will be intellectually sensitive on every side, and catholic in his religious sympathies.

Now I think we may confidently say of Dr. James Clement Moffat, the third, really, in the succession of Princeton's teachers of Church History, that he brought to the Chair the very culture and spirit which are proper to the discipline. If we were asked to describe his attainments, we should say of them that they were the attainments of the man of the humanities, the man educated in the liberal arts, and that in these attainments he was eminent. And of his spirit we should say, that it was humane, that nothing human was foreign to him; and that, therefore, in respect both of culture and of spirit, he was specially fitted to take charge of the department.

There is no need, and there is no opportunity to-day, to tell the story of Dr. Moffat's life up to the time when he became professor in this institution. But there are few stories of Princeton teachers more interesting or quickening than that of his persistent and fervent pursuit of liberal learning, the quick succession of his achievements and his deep joy and sense of triumph in each of them. He was a shepherd boy in Scotland when he began his course of self-culture. For five years, while watching his flocks, he read with avidity every book he could secure. All he read deepened his love of knowledge and strengthened his determination to know more. He became a printer's apprentice, and began a regular course of linguistic and literary study under himself as teacher, and learned Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French and German. As a printer he came to America. By a friend he was introduced to the Faculty of Princeton College. A careful examination revealed his remarkable gifts and still more remarkable knowledge. He was admitted to the Junior Class most gladly and was regarded by his examiners, as indeed he was, as a prize to be seized upon. After a college course of distinction, he was graduated in 1835, being then twenty-four years old.

From his graduation onward he lived the life of a teacher. His success in his work led to many calls for his services. After two years spent in private teaching, just after his graduation, his *Alma Mater* appointed him instructor. In two years more he was invited to Lafayette College as Professor of Greek and Latin. Thence, in 1841, he was called to Miami University as Professor of Latin and Modern History. When at Miami he entered the ministry of the Presbyterian Church. In his theological studies, carried forward while doing the work of his Professorship, he was his own preceptor. He became widely and favorably known throughout the Church. When the Theological Seminary of Cincinnati was founded he was at once asked to take the Chair of Biblical Languages and Literature. The Cincinnati Seminary, owing to conditions for which he was not responsible, had only a brief life; and in 1853 he returned to Princeton as Professor of Latin in the College. For eighteen years he was an active member of the College Faculty, first as Professor of Latin, and then as Professor of the Greek Language and Literature.

It was while he held the latter position that I came to Princeton, in June, 1858, seeking admission to the Sophomore Class. In those days the candidate visited the houses of the examiners and was examined orally. Dr. Moffat was my first examiner. I shall never lose the impression made on me by his cordial welcome and

his courtesy. He was in the vigor of middle age, full of enthusiasm for books and full of interest in the men he taught. He began to teach our class in the Junior year. I remember his interest, not only in Thucydides' *History*, of which I have spoken, but in the *Prometheus Bound* of Æschylus. In connection with the recitations in the *Prometheus*, he delivered what, judging from the interest they awakened in the class, must have been a good course of lectures on the Greek drama. I recall with greater distinctness another course of lectures, also delivered to our class, a course which the class greatly enjoyed and which the lecturer also enjoyed, on the "History of Greek Literature," especially on its extension throughout the East and its mission in preparing the way for Christianity. During my life at college Dr. Moffat had the respect and admiration of all the students.

I entered the Theological Seminary when he was delivering for the first time his lectures on Church History. His large knowledge, his power of rapid work and his vigorous health enabled him to present to his classes a complete course during the first year of his professorship. His conception of Church History was in harmony with that of Dr. Addison Alexander, as the latter had unfolded it in his introductory lectures, which were published after his death. For twenty-five years Dr. Moffat taught faithfully and ably this great subject in a course which covered the field well, and with an enthusiasm which did not at all abate until ill-health compelled him to abandon all work. Conceiving Church History as the story of a spiritual progress in human society, he dwelt with most delight in the spirit of Neander on the Church's internal life. But he was at his best, I think, when he unfolded to us the historical movement of Christianity in its relations to European civilization. Many are the points at which his treatment of the latter subject seemed to me especially felicitous. His religious life was sincere and deep, and his religious feelings struggled after outward expression. As a result the religious spirit was always manifest in his lectures and often deeply impressed the class.

I was not one of those who knew him well personally. Those students who did were charmed by his cordiality, his sincerity and his affectionate interest in them. He enjoyed the high respect and the confidence of his colleagues. Let me repeat the words of one of them, who was himself the incarnation of simplicity and sincerity of character:

"As a professor and teacher," said Dr. William Henry Green, "Dr. Moffat was most assiduous and punctual in the discharge of every duty belonging to his posi-

tion, and he was ever ready to bear any additional burden or perform any task assigned to him with the utmost cheerfulness and promptitude. He was a model of Christian, gentlemanly bearing on all occasions, and received as he deserved universal respect and confidence. He won the respect and affection of all his pupils; and his guileless nature, his purity of character, his undeviating sense of honor and of right and the thorough consistency of his Christian spirit and demeanor secured for him universal admiration."

Of course, as a teacher, Dr. Moffat had defects. What teacher has not? With his ability and ample knowledge and well-wrought course, I think we must say that it was a fault of his that too often he abandoned himself to enthusiasm in the presence of classes which were not prepared to respond to it. I think we must also say that he was deficient in what all of us are deficient. He lacked in severity. In his case these were but defects of his virtues. His affection for his subject had to express itself even in the presence of the unappreciating, and his want of severity proceeded from no weakness of character, but from the charity that suffereth long and is kind.

Thus Dr. Moffat lived and taught the students of the Theological Seminary for more than a quarter of a century. We cherish as a precious possession the memory of what he was and did. To have labored with enthusiasm in a great field for so long a period, bringing to his work a large and disciplined mind, cultivated by the noblest studies faithfully, lovingly and successfully pursued, and to have exhibited a character like that described by his colleague, Dr. Green, a character so high in its ideals, so resolute in their pursuit, so pure in its affections, so charitable in its judgments, so faithful to duty, so Christian in warp and woof—such a teacher, such a man, such a life and the memory of them were and are and must remain a rich blessing to Princeton Theological Seminary. Therefore, I am sure that, with gratitude to God, we all rejoice in the inscription of his name on the wall of this chapel, already wealthy in the names of other great and good men. And so, Mr. President Green, I have the honor to offer this memorial tablet for the acceptance of the Board of Trustees.

*Princeton.*

JOHN DEWITT.