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THE RESURRECTION AND THE ORIGIN OF THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM.

There are various ways of approaching the study of early Christianity. One way is to begin with Paul. The writings that have come down to us in the New Testament under his name, so far as they are genuine, are primary sources for the history of the apostolic age. Pfeiderer, for example, begins his *Urchristentum* with the words: "One can only regret that we know so little that is certain about the first beginnings of the Christian Church, but the fact itself can not well be contested. Only from the time of the emergence of the Apostle Paul, in whose Epistles authentic information is preserved, does the historical darkness become in a measure illuminated; concerning the first beginnings of the Church, however, Paul gives but scanty hints (1 Cor. 15: 3ff.), from which a distinct conception of the process can not be obtained. This lack, moreover, is not fully supplied by the Gospels and Acts which were written later."² A more common way, however, even among those who share Pfl-

¹ An address delivered in substance at the opening of the ninety-fifth session of Princeton Theological Seminary on Friday, September 21, 1906.

² *Urchristentum*³ I, p. 1. Man mag es bedauern, dass wir über die ersten Anfänge der christlichen Kirche so wenig Sicheres wissen, aber die Tatsache selbst ist nicht wohl zu bestreiten. Erst vom Auftreten des Apostels Paulus an, in dessen Briefen authentische Nachrichten

MODERN PRACTICAL THEOLOGY.¹

I gladly accept this opportunity of expressing to the Board of Directors my full appreciation of the honor their election has conferred. It is indeed a distinction to be asked to serve this Seminary which for nearly one hundred years has held such a conspicuous and honorable place in the history of our church. It is an inspiration to be allowed to assume even in part the duties of predecessors who have been illustrious both for piety and learning. It is a privilege to be associated with the members of a faculty who are no less eminent for Christian scholarship than for loyal devotion to the word of God.

I am more desirous still of signifying my profound sense of the sacredness of the trust imposed upon me and the seriousness of the responsibilities assumed. With this purpose in view, I desire to speak of the present scope and importance of that Department within which my duties shall lie. Aside, however, from all personal considerations such a discussion is demanded by the nature of the occasion; for, the ceremony of the hour formally marks the reorganization of the Practical Department of this Seminary and its enlargement by the establishment of a new chair. The subject therefore suggested for our consideration is Modern Practical Theology.

Because of certain possible implications, the use of the three words united in this theme may need to be defended or explained. For instance, there are those who would deny us the right to employ, in this connection, the rubric "Theology." They remind us, not without force, that we have here to do with the work of the minister and with the

¹ Address by the Reverend Charles R. Erdman on the occasion of his inauguration as Professor of Practical Theology in the Seminary of the Presbyterian Church at Princeton, N. J., November 13, 1906, 11 a. m., Miller Chapel.

working church—with methods, and service and life; and that Theology is exactly the thing with which here we are not concerned. It may be sufficient to reply that “Theology” is to-day a wider term than when employed by the early Christian writers, who limited it to the doctrine of the nature of God; or as used by Peter Abelard, who, in the twelfth century, first began to employ it to denote scientific instruction concerning God and the Divine Life. It is now popularly understood to designate the entire science of religion and to include the realm of individual Christian experience as well as of the corporate life and activities of the church. We heartily wish that the term had been sacredly guarded as the title of Systematic Theology, the “Queen of the Sciences”; but since this has not been done, we shall assume the right of still using the word to suggest at least that the branches included in the Practical Department form an integral and important part of the curriculum in which Theology is taught.

Then again the term “Practical,” when employed as the distinctive designation of one among several coordinate departments, seems to many to be arrogant, polemic, unkind. It is supposed to suggest that the other departments are not practical; that they are indeed useless, to some greater or less degree. It is needless in this presence to emphasize the fact that the word is here employed, with becoming humility, to indicate that this particular discipline aims to show how the useful materials which other departments supply can be put into practice. It teaches how truth can be applied to life. It is specially dependent upon the work of the other departments, yet united with them it forms the crown of the Theological scheme. It aims to transform pupils into preachers; scholars into shepherds of souls; learners into leaders and teachers of men.

Most of all it may be necessary to explain the use of the term “Modern.” When united with the word “Theology” it occasions alarm in some quarters and suggests “New Theology,” breadth without depth, sentimentality, heresy,

weakness, immaturity, unbelief. Let us then insist that the theology is most truly modern which is most deeply rooted in the past, which holds most tenaciously to truth once for all revealed, but which welcomes increasing light and seeks to adapt its message and its methods to present conditions of life.

It is because the Practical Department still embraces the branches which in the past constituted its essence, while it is at the same time widening its scope to meet certain changing conditions, that this Department is now being given a larger and more prominent place. Such conditions have emerged both within the sphere of Theological instruction and in the field of organized Christian work. In the Seminary curriculum there has been a marked enlargement of the various departments. For instance, we note the rapid growth of the department of "Biblical Exegesis." No Seminary would be considered as possessing a modern equipment if allowed but one Professor for its Exegetical department. This discipline has been divided into the departments of "Old Testament Literature and Exegesis," and "New Testament Literature and Exegesis"; each of these has been broadened to deal with the problems of modern Biblical Criticism; and the whole department has been greatly strengthened by the addition of the admirable discipline known as "Biblical Theology." Of the other departments of study the same widening of scope is in large measure true. If, therefore, the Directors of this Seminary are now determining to strengthen and enlarge the Practical Department, it is with no intention of destroying the delicately adjusted balance of the Theological curriculum, but only of affording to this department a development and place which are proportionate and just.

The novel features which characterize modern Christian activity are still more generally known and recognized. They have been manifested, for example, in an increasing intricacy of church organization; in an endeavor to meet the loud demand for social service; in the scientific development

of Sabbath-school methods; in the enlarging sphere of benevolent and missionary boards; in a recognized comity between religious denominations; in the world-wide extension of Christian associations; in the great forward, evangelistic movements at home and abroad. With such significant modern conditions in mind, the mere mention of the various branches of Practical Theology will suggest the necessity of reconstructing and developing this department, and thus the purpose of the hour will be fulfilled.

First of all, possibly most important of all, stands the discipline of Homiletics, or the "Science of Preaching," with its closely related discipline of Liturgics, or the "Science of Public Worship." The peculiar function of the Theological Seminary has ever been to produce scholarly and spiritual ministers of the Word; but there is a special demand, to-day, for men who are particularly skilled in the art of public speech. It is needless to deny a prevalent religious indifference. The masses are not thronging into the churches. If a preacher is to secure a hearing he must possess more than average ability as a pulpit orator. The most thoughtful and polished sermonizer is a conspicuous failure in the modern ministry unless he can so preach as to attract an audience and to compel men to listen to the message he has carefully prepared. It is therefore natural that the Theological Seminary should now be expected to afford more extended drill in the delivery of sermons, and to place a greater emphasis upon the art of public address. So, too, in the matter of public worship, the recent publication of our "Book of Forms" emphasizes the demand for a ministry more carefully instructed in the principles and practice of the Presbyterian Church. But of the importance of these branches, and of their further development, it is not necessary for me to speak. By the definite action of the Board of Directors the Practical Department in this Seminary is now divided. The instruction in Homiletics and Liturgics is now assigned to a specific chair under the title of "Homiletics"; while the remaining branches of the

department are to constitute the province of a new chair under the inclusive title of "Practical Theology."

Among the latter, Ecclesiastics, or the "Science of Church Government," holds a significant place. It is a familiar and an open question as to whether this particular discipline is properly classified as a branch of Practical Theology. Possibly the discussion may be determined by the particular method which an instructor may pursue. If one should gather from the New Testament all the texts and references relating to the apostolic church and should thus determine and set forth its exact organization and the functions of its officers, while truly dealing with church government, his labors would lie within the sphere of Exegesis.

Or, should one become a master of patristic literature and discover the exact form of church government which emerged in the Post-Apostolic age, or should he discuss those forms of church polity which obtained in later centuries, he might be doing the proper work of the historian. But if one endeavors to set forth the existing principles and practices of the Presbyterian Church, and if he seeks to drill his pupils in the "Form of Government" and the "Book of Discipline," he may be laboring wholly within the sphere of the Practical Theologian. And such discipline is need to-day. Serious problems are continually confronting us, as, for example, with reference to the work and status of the Evangelist, or the relation of Mission Presbyteries to Mission Boards, or the duty of the local church to its lapsed members, or the constitution and province of the church courts, or the relations to be maintained with sister denominations. While less may be said to-day than in other years of a "*jure divino* Presbyterianism," there is no less need than ever that candidates for the Presbyterian ministry should be carefully instructed in those principles which, if peculiar to our polity, we heartily believe to be in harmony with the word of God and in accord with the practice of the primitive church.

The third great branch of Practical Theology which has been given a prominent place in the curriculum of other

years is known as Poimenics or the "Science of Pastoral Care." We are not ready to admit that the need of Pastoral service is ended. In spite of the prominence rightly given to the popular preacher and the place which is afforded to the ordained superintendent of the institutional church, we are firmly convinced that the times demand the continued work of the Christian Pastor. In fact, certain developments in modern life suggest a peculiar need for pastoral work. It is true that a gulf begins to yawn between certain classes and the Christian church. It is by the work of the Christian Pastor that this gulf in no small measure can be bridged; in all homes he is welcome; among all circles he can freely move. Then, too, if leaders of Christian activity are so properly emphasizing to-day the need of "individual work for individuals," a special call comes to the Christian minister to fit himself for pre-eminence in this sphere. Yet in preparation for such work, special training should be given. "Many a one who appears a hero in the toga makes but a sorry figure as soon as he grasps the shepherd's staff." The cure of souls is the "Art of Arts." Yet there are many who seem to imagine that it demands merely common sense and experience to be proficient in this art; while others are satisfied in affirming that "pastors are born, not made." We shall be so bold as to assume that, on the subject of pastoral care, certain suggestions may be made which do not belong to the sphere of innate ideas and need not be learned in the school of failure.

Closely allied with this discipline is that which in olden days was known as Catechetics or the "Science of the Religious Training of the Young." There was a time when such a discipline related more particularly to that drill in the "catechism," which the word may seem to imply. We may use it to-day to designate the science of Sabbath-School organization. This, too, is supposed by many to be a somewhat unnecessary discipline; but those who realize the lessening religious influence of Christian homes, and who have observed the careful development and thoughtful system-

atizing of modern methods in Sabbath School work, are best able to congratulate that sister Seminary which so fully appreciates the demands of the time that it has established a chair to deal specifically with the problems of Sabbath School work.

There is another branch of this department, which is classed under the difficult title of Archagics, or the "Science of Organized Christian Work." The title may be novel, but the discipline is suggested by the words of the Apostle Paul. He declared that pastors and teachers were given "for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of ministering unto the building up of the body of Christ." He implied, therefore, that the pastor should aim at developing the Christian activities of his people, and at leading them into various lines of Christian service. Never before have there been so many forms of organized Christian activity. The pastor is most successful to-day who regards his church as an instrument, not an end; who believes it to be not merely a field to cultivate, but a force to wield; who knows how to utilize such great instruments as the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations, the Society of Christian Endeavor, the Men's Brotherhood;—who is fully aware of the scope and functions and activities of our Missionary Boards;—who is most familiar with the modern movements of the Christian world;—who keeps himself in vital connection with the pulsating life of the universal church. There is therefore an imperative need of more specific and extended instruction in modern forms and methods of Christian work. On the resulting breadth of sympathy and exactness of knowledge the usefulness of the ministry will largely depend.

We should also mention Halieutics or that branch of theological science which has to do with Evangelistic and Missionary work. The great Evangelistic movement in our own church, which has been so largely furthered by the personal activity of a distinguished number of our Board of Trustees, is suggesting the need of ministers specially trained in Evan-

gelistic methods, as well as imbued with Evangelistic fervor and endowed with spiritual power. So, too, the great Missionary awakening of the present day is making a new demand upon our Seminaries, and is suggesting that it is not enough for us to train Pastors and Preachers for service at home, but that our course should be so adjusted as to favor the instruction of Missionary Evangelists, who will be specialists, trained for their unique work in the foreign field. We congratulate that School of Divinity which has recently established a chair of "Missionary Practice and Methods." It suggests to us another line in which the times demand that the Practical Department of the Seminary should be enlarged.

In addition to the branches thus briefly outlined, the Directors have added another and have specifically requested that upon this new Department I should place the chief stress of my future work. It is the so-called Department of English Bible. Here again we are confronted with a title for which some apology must be made and which may appear difficult of defense. The word "English" is not altogether complimentary to the Professor in charge. It may imply a certain ignorance of Hebrew and of Greek, an implication, the truth of which, my modesty or my honesty forbids me to dispute. On the other hand, his colleagues in the Faculty might not be delighted with the word "Bible" if it seemed at all to suggest that this new department was the only one in which that book was properly or specifically taught. The same difficulty emerged when the Department of Biblical Theology was established. Its title seemed to arrogate to this discipline some distinguishing devotion to the Bible; but all fears and offense proved groundless; and the department has been conducted with the modesty which characterizes true greatness. Biblical Theology has simply approached the Scripture with a new aim and applied to the study a new method. Such in part is the case with "English Bible," which is the study of the Scriptures with a distinctly practical aim, and with a definite literary method. It might

be called the "Literary and Homiletic Study of the Bible." It is to be doubted, however, whether this designation would prove more illuminating to the Christian public at large. There is a sense in which this discipline will be preparatory to the work of the other departments as it will secure, first of all, a broad and comprehensive view of the Bible as a whole and then of its separate books in their outline and content. In another sense it will be supplemental to the other departments, as it will cover those portions of the word of God for which in other years no time for special instruction could be found. Yet in the truest sense its field is peculiar and unique, as it aims at such a special, practical spiritual and Evangelistic interpretation of the Bible as will directly equip the preacher for his pulpit and the pastor for his personal work;—to definitely "perfect the man of God and thoroughly furnish him for every good work." The multiplication of Bible Schools and Institutes, the ignorance of the Scriptures openly confessed by ministers, the increasing demand for the Biblical instruction of lay workers, the revival of expository preaching, these and kindred signs of the times have convinced the Directors that for such a department there is a place among the disciplines of the Theological curriculum, and a place second in importance to none.

Such in brief survey is the vast field of Modern Practical Theology. To select from this the portion which can be covered in the few hours of the crowded weekly schedule which are fairly allotted to one Professor, is the chief difficulty of the task I to-day assume. Yet the Board of Directors are confronted by an even more delicate and difficult problem. It is to so adjust this enlarged department to the Seminary curriculum as to do no injustice to the other departments while meeting the imperious demand of the times in establishing this new chair. In the solution of your problem I shall be honored to find myself of any possible service, as I shall need your personal co-operation in the performance of my task.

So far as I know I have accepted your call because of no desire for personal advancement or gain, but because of my appreciation of the important work of this Seminary which I to-day promise to faithfully serve. I have been encouraged by the generous and cordial friendship of the Faculty, whose wise counsels and kind sympathy will make the performance of my daily duties a delight.

Conscious of my limitations and imperfections, my dependence must be upon the sustaining grace of God in Christ Jesus, to Whom be all the glory now and forever. Amen.

Princeton.

CHARLES R. ERDMAN.