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## THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION ; OR, BRINGING LOST MEN HOME TO GOD.\*

2 Cor. 5: 18, "And hath given unto us the ministry of reconciliation."

My brethren of the graduating class, it is to you particularly that the commencement preacher is speaking this morning, to you so soon to embark upon your active and blessed work. He earnestly desires to do you real service to-day, and hence he means to bring you, straight from the word of God, a divine message. It will be his aim not to wander one moment from his text, but to unfold and apply just what is here said in the Scriptures.

The words announced simply introduce the subject which the subsequent context develops, namely, the ministry of reconciliation.

This ministry is a service, the object of which is to effect a complete reconciliation between God and man, or, to use the imagery of the parable of the prodigal son, to bring men home to God. The rendering of this blessed service, Paul declares, is given unto us, that is, unto the whole company of believers, the church of God in this world, the body of Christ, out of whom, however, as we shall see later there are certain men chosen, who are to devote themselves more particularly to the "word of reconciliation."

It is this ministry committed to the church and particularly to the preachers of the gospel, this work of bringing lost men

\*Baccalaureate Sermon, Union Theological Seminary, May 1908.

## ADDRESS AT THE OPENING OF THE NINETY-SEVENTH SESSION, SEPT. 9, 1908.

PROF. T. C. JOHNSON, D. D.

"Quit you like men, be strong." I Cor. 16: 13.

"Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ." 1 Cor. 11:1.

"Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth." 2 Tim. 2: 15.

These three passages yield us a threefold ideal which the ministerial student should strive to realize in his own life. They yield this ideal so directly, or by such plain implications, that, with this audience, their exposition may be omitted as unnecessary, and the time given to the unfolding and vindication of the ideal. The ideal may be presented in the following form:

*Be a man. Be a man of the kingdom. Be a workman in the kingdom who can stand without shame in God's sight, marking out aright the word of truth.*

I. *Be a man. Be a virile man.*

Have the so-called *cardinal* virtues with which the pagan philosophers clothed ideal manhood,—the virtues of prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude.

Have the virtue of prudence: "The habit of acting at all times with deliberation and forethought"; the habit of choosing the best ends and prosecuting them in appropriate ways. You *must* have it in order to trusted and effective leadership of long continuance.

Have the virtue of justice,—that virtue which, as Cicero teaches, accords to every one his rights,—that virtue which not simply talks in a fair way, but does in a fair way,—that virtue, which, for example, does not permit a man to make a debt without purpose to pay it; which moves a man to pay his debt on the stipulated day if possible, or, if that be impossible, to re-adjust the matter in a fair way,—that virtue which moves a man to do the right thing between himself and his neighbor in every relation.

Have the virtue of temperance,—that virtue which, as Cicero says, admonishes us to follow *reason* in things to be sought or shunned—that virtue by which all our natural appetites, desires, passions and affections, should be controlled—that virtue which especially guards against the temptations to pleasure and self-indulgence,—that virtue which may be, with large propriety, almost identified with self-control. As certainly as you are to become leaders of men,—controllers of men for Christ's sake, so certain is it that you will stand in need of self-control.

Have the virtue of fortitude,—that virtue which *actively* manifests itself as resolution, or steadfastness “to duty in the face of difficulty and danger which cannot be avoided,” or as sane and clear-visioned courage in the midst of perils from which there may be escape,—that virtue which, *passively* viewed, is patience, the capacity to receive knocks until the hostile force is worn out, and then bounds up serenely persistent.

Have these virtues which the great pagan philosophers regarded as cardinal; and if there be other natural virtues, and there are, have them. Be a strong man ethically, a man whom your fellows may sometimes feel provoked to call the accusative case, as John Calvin's college mates called him, because he rebuked so sharply every tendency to moral laxity in others and especially in himself. Have such regard for moral principles as to keep, if possible, a conscience void of offense before God, as Paul did even prior to his vision on the way to Damascus. A just reputation for integrity gives a leader tremendous power with his people. The want of it is a fatal handicap. A man, of princely endowment, in the United States Senate, had such a reputation a few years ago. It gave him huge potency. His very bearing, which seemed to say, No man can impeach my integrity, kindled a vast respect in his colleagues. But the day came when that reputation was smirched. He lost power which he has not regained, and perhaps will never regain. Do ye win the reputation for stainless integrity in all your relations with your fellow-men and *keep it*.

Be strong mentally: be thorough; be massive; be masterful; and be mentally adaptable. Bulk in mind, as well as in char-

acter; and with your mental bulk, endeavor to win the strength of agility and easy adaptation to diversity of subject.

Be big in heart,—full of sympathy with the joys and sorrows of all classes and conditions of men,—afflicted to tears with their woes, and rejoicing in all their rightful pleasures. Be strong enough in every way to carry your own burdens and the burdens of weaker men in addition. Be great enough to do it without any ugly consciousness of what you are and what you are doing. Be a Paul in this matter so far as in you lies.

A Scotch parishioner is said to have passed the following criticism on three successive incumbents of his parish: "Our first minister," said he, "was a man, but he was not a minister; our second was a minister, but he was not a man; and the one we have at present is neither a man nor a minister." Young gentlemen, I hold forth as a part of the ideal you should keep before you that of *being a man*. Heed the exhortation of the apostle more and more. Strive evermore to quit you like men, to be strong. And remember that while the *absolute* weakling cannot become strong, the man of relatively modest native endowments, by *enough labor, of the right sort, properly directed*, can become *strong* mentally, even as the tiny sprout under proper conditions can grow into the giant oak; that ethical quality can be developed indefinitely; and that heart power, nobility of affections, grows with the using.

## II. *Be a man of the kingdom.*

Be a man of the kingdom of heaven: It is presumed that you have been born into the kingdom; that, as empowered by the Holy Spirit, you exercise faith and repentance, and are a child of the kingdom. It is yours, however, to be a *man* of the kingdom; to let your life come under the full sway of the laws of the kingdom; to be governed to the utmost by the principles of the kingdom. This is vastly more important than to be a strong man by native endowments and secular culture and growth.

To have a great sense of sin, including the sinfulness of one's own righteousness, to have a great grasp of the measureless grace of Christ, and to be seized upon in a great way by the prin-

ciples of the kingdom, is of cardinal importance. Strive then to bring yourselves more and more under the laws of the kingdom: Be "poor in spirit,"—stand in the presence of God until, taught by the Spirit, you perceive fully your native spiritual nakedness and your present want of all that is good save as supplied by him. Mourn also for your aloofness from God on account of sin,—on account of the dominion sin still has over you, and the polluting power of that sin. Carrying about with you a sense of your apartness from God on account of sin, and mourning over it, cry, "Do what seemeth Thee good, O Lord; my life, my soul are not my own. I have nothing, I am nothing before Thee." I have no case before Thee. In other words, be meek, my brethren. Carrying about with you a sense of your poverty of spirit before God, and mournful grief for your sin, and a feeling of thorough meekness rooting out all self-will and pride, in the Divine presence, *hunger and thirst* after the righteousness of the kingdom of God,—for that righteousness which will pass current in the kingdom of heaven, the righteousness wrought out by Christ in the behalf of his people: crave a larger sense of it.

Toward your fellow-men be merciful,—forgiving and compassionate and ready to help the needy. Be pure in heart. Be peace-makers. Suffer persecution for righteousness' sake, if need be. Ponder and take in the meaning of the beatitudes, as given in Matthew 5: 2-12. For they set forth the blessedness of those in whom the laws of the kingdom are applied. You can hardly stress the practical importance of this overmuch. Study the Decalogue. It ever remains the articulate expression of the law of the unchanging God. Study it as interpreted in the Sermon on the Mount; and in the summary of it given by our Lord: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Study its exhibition in the life of Christ—of right our great exemplar; and conclude with the Apostle Paul: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels and have not love, I am become as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the

gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned and have not love, it profiteth me nothing. Love suffereth long and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

As Paul gave himself to the practical magnification of love as the fulfilling of the law, as well as to its theoretical magnification, so it behooves you to do. As he looked upon Christ so do you also look upon Christ. See in him not only a life wrought out in accord with the laws of the kingdom; but the Head of the kingdom, full of all knowledge and wisdom and grace; and cultivate a personal attachment for him so great that you will long to govern yourselves wholly in accord with the principles of the kingdom; which is his will.

In proportion as your life shows want of conformity with the principles of the kingdom of Christ, in that proportion will your usefulness be fatally clogged. In proportion as you shall be governed evidently by those principles, in that proportion will your abilities for good-doing be enlarged. That you may be governed by these principles, cultivate, with the Spirit's aid, a consuming love for Christ, by communing with him in the study of his word, and by throwing yourself more and more into his plans for the salvation of the world. Be not satisfied till you can say, "The love of Christ constraineth us"; till you can live the life of the kingdom, because it is the mind of Jesus that you should; till you can let Christ go about in your person doing the kind of work in part he did when he was here on the earth.

*Be a man of the kingdom,—a full-grown man of Christ's kingdom. Keep the apostle's exhortation ever before you: Be ye imitators of me as I also am of Christ.*

III. *Be a workman in God's kingdom, who can stand without shame in God's sight, marking out aright the word of truth. In other words, Be a minister approved of God.*

Cast the mind forward over your whole life's work. **Aspire to do it well, so that you shall not be ashamed as you stand before God, so well that God will approve it. If you meet His approval it will be enough. It will be everything worth having. Aspire to meet it, and aspire to the training necessary in order to meet it. To meet that approval, you must come to know the task set before you and how to do it, and be skilled to do it. It will be yours to lead a portion of the church of Christ in its work of gathering in and building up Christ's own people,— to bring men, women and children to Christ and to build them up in Christlike character and devotion to him; and to do this by applying to them the truth of God and the "power of God."**

There is much talk to-day about what should be taught in a theological seminary to fit the student for the ministry. Says Mr. David Spence Hill, in his "The Education and Problems of the Protestant Ministry," page 81, "Reduce to the minimum the study of Hebrew and of Greek texts and of worn-out courses that have relatively low claim to educational value in the light of modern thought. Substitute for these thorough training in the foundations of the physical and biological sciences, in sociology culminating in the new psychology."  
\* \* \* "The ministry is concerned with life in its richest phases, yet the seminaries universally omit the science of life, biology, from their curricula, or demanded preparation. Instruction in preaching, in pastoral service, in scientific theology, in the inexhaustible lessons of the Scriptures would go hand in hand with biology, evolution, practical sociology, child study, hygiene, modern pedagogy, general psychology; and with the aspiring and promising psychology of religion."

On page 86 of the same work we read: "The comparative study of religions, psychology and its ramifications, religious experience, biology, mental and physical hygiene, child study,

adolescence, suggestion and hypnotism are subjects of vital importance to the modern minister."

On page 89 we read: "A consideration of the obvious opportunities pressing upon the ministers and laymen of the churches where they have turned aside from the usual routine described, includes a plea for more attention to social distress rather than to devising means of escape from a transcendental devil.

. . . A reinterpretation and practicalization of Christianity compatible with modern needs is demanded."

On page 90 we read: "The new ministry is called upon to make some contribution, by forcing legislation, arousing sentiment, by preaching, persuasion, vigilance, investigation, publicity or punishment,—to the prevention of sin and disease and their basis—the ill use of wealth and needless poverty."

On page 91 we read: "Less of Hebrew and linguistic studies, of dogmatic theologies and ecclesiastical history is needed and more of the sciences." . . . "In the seminaries there lies the possibility of great development. Harvard College was established with the aid of the Puritanical spirit, and was repeatedly succored by lotteries, but to-day, as an independent university, is a foremost institution of learning."

According to this writer, and he represents no small host, "the superlative value of scientific investigation is to be granted." Biology and psychology are co-ordinate sources of authority in religion; and apparently are rated severally as sources of authority superior in value to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

Many persons, who have a much greater respect for the Bible but who are destitute of any thorough knowledge of psychology, true or false, destitute of any knowledge of biology,—true or false,—and destitute of any knowledge of the nascent science of sociology, true or false,—destitute of any solid reason for holding any particular form of evolution, save that it seems to them to be in vogue, have made themselves ridiculous by joining this host in the demand for the revolutionizing of the teaching in the evangelical seminaries of America and Great Britain. In charity it must be supposed that these latter per-



sons utterly fail to grasp the implications of such a step; utterly fail to see that those who have led in the demand for placing these sciences in seminary curricula, naturalize Christianity, annihilate the doctrines of grace, and leave Christianity merely a system of morals and the best only of natural religions.

A cry of a somewhat different sort comes from Harvard itself. Prof. Peabody is heard mourning that theology has come to be regarded as of little or no account in a man's equipment for the ministry. He holds that the neglect of it is a grave mistake, which threatens the usefulness of the ministry; and that feeling and action are crowding out of the foreground of interest the function of thought; that passion for service is crowding out the passion for truth. He declares that the Christian church is confronted with the following dilemma:

"Either it must frankly retreat from the pretense of leadership under the conditions of the present age, or it must become a more efficient organ of rational and candid thought. Not less of religious fervor and not less of practical activity are demanded of the representatives of religion, but a new accession of intellectual power. the capacity to translate the message of the timeless into the dialect of the present age. The specialization of knowledge has prescribed to the minister of religion a definite sphere, and no amount of hastily acquired information about politics or economics or social reform can atone for the abandonment of his own province. On other subjects others are better trained than he, and may listen to his counsel with compassion, if not with contempt. If he gives up thinking about religion, he gives up his place in a learned profession. He may continue to be a devoted priest, an efficient administrator, a devout soul, but the direction of the mind of the age is transferred to other hands."

Without undertaking to endorse every suggestion in Dr. Peabody's words, it may be said, without hesitation, that they contain much truth. Some seminary courses suffer much from fatty degeneration. They attempt to teach so many things that they teach little that is worth while,—don't teach *the word of truth*.

A quotation from Dr. W. A. Bartlett, pastor of the First Congregational Church of Chicago, has been going the rounds, which is worth recital in this connection. He observes that in the theological seminary, as in the college, too many things are taught and not enough of that which is most needed in the ministry. He says:

“There are undoubtedly churches which are decadent, and the reasons for it are not far to seek. I lay the trouble to the insufficient training of the theological seminary. They are teaching more things than ever, but not always the one thing needful. The young man who goes into a community as minister has often very vague ideas concerning the great doctrines of the Bible. He has a kind of pottering knowledge of many things, which makes him believe that the regeneration of the neighborhood is to be brought about through a gentle, ethical social settlement regime. He dabbles in politics, economics, clubs and various worthy institutions, which were never intended to take the place of the church, and becomes a kind of errand boy for everything, from the bricklayers’ union to a woman’s guild, to provide soft food for people without teeth. The church has one great mission, and when it faithfully fulfills that mission it will never lack in interest and power. The mission of the church is to preach to mankind the whole counsel of God.”

Dr. Bartlett throws out a large mass of truth in these words. He does not express the whole truth. The minister is to be pastor of a flock, and ruler in the house and kingdom of God, as well as a preacher. But so far as teaching is his function, it is to teach to man simply and merely the whole counsel of God as contained in His word,—His revealed word.

One of Paul’s exhortations, with which we set out, is, “*Give diligence to present thyself unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth.*”

By “the word of truth” there is no question as to Paul’s meaning. He meant *that revealed truth*, the communication of which was begun with the promise to Eve, continued under the Old Dispensation, and absolutely completed in the time of Christ

and his apostles. Paul pronounces the anathema against all who preach any other gospel. The word of truth is to be preached, whether its doctrine of regeneration be *allowed by the new psychology or not*. Neither Starbuck, nor Coe, nor Hall, or James are given a right to modify *this word of truth*, to bend its honest interpretation, by their philosophies, and add to the word, so interpreted, the results of their psychological investigations and expect them to be regarded as bases of faith. The content of the *word of truth*, is, according to the word itself, to regulate all the minister's work, whether as pastor or ecclesiastical ruler, or preacher,—all his ministerial work. For, mark you, as a minister of Christ, a man is concerned only with the forwarding of the truth revealed, and the gathering-in and building-up thereby of the church of Christ. As a citizen he may be interested in the carrying out of many reforms, indeed, in human society and government. But as a minister of Christ his business is to preach the gospel, make disciples, organize the disciples into self-perpetuating churches, build them up as such, help to govern them, all in accord with the word of truth. The apostles had as large a call to settle economico-social disputes,—disputes between labor and capital, etc.,—as the church of our day has. These disputes had as moral an aspect in that day as in this. But they and the Lord Christ definitely refused to handle such disputes. They had a very definite conception of the "work to which they had been called" and the instrument to be used in doing the work, the word of truth. They gave themselves to planting and training the church, to the ministry of the word and to prayer.

Now, my brethren, I fearlessly urge that you place, in the ideal of your future, that you shall *be a workman approved of God, marking out aright the word of truth*; and I exhort that you *set in for the realization of that ideal not later than to-morrow*; by beginning in dead earnest the mastery of the Bible, which brings to you the word of truth. You cannot mark out the word of truth aright without knowing it; and you have set your faces toward the ministry of the word in the Lord's house.

In the face of prevalent detraction of courses similarly

planned, I do not hesitate to say that you will find here a helpful Bible school. This school was intended by its founders to be a Bible school. It has recalled the original intention in word from time to time; and a fair study of its curriculum of to-day will result in the conclusion that it is a Bible school. The chairs are five. Two of these are devoted for the most part to the *interpretation* of the Scriptures in the original tongues. Let me say, I myself worked up thirty-eight sermon "briefs" during the vacation which has just closed, and that on about thirty-eight of the texts I consulted the original tongue with profit, feeling often that the translation was not perfectly clear in meaning to me, until I had consulted the original; and that often the only satisfactory comment on the comment in the commentary was to be found in the original. The knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures is of great value to those who have the energy, the ability and the time to acquire them. To these exegetical chairs, manned by three professors, has been added the work on the English Bible in the Stuart Robinson Professorship,—a most valuable supplement, intended to give a general grasp of the English Bible as a whole, and, as far as possible, a working use of it.

The systematic theology here taught, or the orderly statement of the entire content of scriptural teaching, so far as grasped by the scientific mind, is built up on the basis of exegesis of the Scriptures; and is intended to possess the mind of the student of such a general grasp of the entire Scripture truth as will make it relatively easy for him, in the light of the whole, to interpret aright any particular part. Coming from exegetical study of the Scripture it should lead back more perfect exegesis. There can be no adequate study of the Bible without systematic theology.

Church history traces the church's slow growth in the scientific grasp of Bible teaching midst multitudinous errors; traces the abandonment of biblical forms of worship and polity, and biblical ideals of life, through the Patristic and Middle Ages, and illustrates and illumines the sacred page, as the commentary of man's life on the teachings

of the word; it traces the resurrection and restoration of the biblical principles and ideals in the Reformation and subsequent periods. It illustrates the teaching concerning the nature and growth of the church of God, vivifies our knowledge of the content of Scripture teaching as nothing else will, and prevents the minister's finding mare's nests everywhere, as men are doing who have had no such discipline,—prevents his running into manifold and long exploded errors.

Practical theology teaches the student how to use the truths of Scripture in dealing with men, how to deal with men in all ages, and how to deal with the men of his own day,—how to deal with them on biblical principles,—how to win them and build them up as the disciples of Christ, so far as the power lies with man.

We do not claim that the course offered you is the best in the world, much less that it is ideal and utterly incapable of improvement. The eyes of the institution are open, it is hoped, to the perception of truth on all sides. Its ears are ready for all suggestions touching improvement in the method of the work it has been established to do. Should a new psychology arise, informed with the truths which the Scriptures teach,—a psychology true and profound,—we pray that it may receive a recognition here. Likewise, we pray that a spirit of cordial appreciation for genuinely scientific work in every department of legitimate human research may ever reign here; and that such advances as may be made from "time to time" may contribute to the more rotund and perfect work of this institution in its own appropriate sphere. We have an humble hope, I am sure, that in this one sentence I can voice the sentiments of my colleagues as well as my own,—an humble hope of improving the course in various respects from year to year as light and ability shall be given. Speaking further and again for myself, I am sure, young gentlemen, that, with the exception of my own department of which I will say nothing, you will not find a better Bible school, perhaps, in this country, even though you should go to the Chicago Moody Institute; supposing you wish to win a lasting and growing efficiency as a

Bible teacher and preacher amongst our own people. Having said this, let me say that I have entertained an increasing respect too for the Moody Institute, as a place where the Bible is studied as the word of God, that its students may go forth and preach the word as the instrument of the world's salvation. I have examined the curricula of not a few institutions, and I repeat that, *on a fair trial*, you will find this school ranking high as a school of Bible study,—a school that gives, and gives well, the core of Bible teaching.

We don't teach the new psychology except so far as it furnishes some fact, or principle, or pseudo-fact, or pseudo-principle, which can be used for the better presentation of the *word of truth*. We do not teach biology, though allusions are made to truths and assumptions therein for illustrative purposes, gain. Some of us, as yet, have no serious thought of attempting to settle the question between labor and capital, save in so far as the bringing out of the great ethical principles by which men should be guided in all such contests shall contribute to that end. The church, whose organ this seminary is, has given us no commission to do any such thing; but forbids it in her constitution which we have vowed to support.

In this Bible school, we are going to invite you to all reverent freedom in handling every question that comes up in the sphere of Bible study. We are going to give you all the honest aid in the settlement of every question that arises in this sphere, in our power; and we shall be happy, if you come to believe with us; if you come to be, by well-founded conviction, after exhaustive study, Calvinistic Presbyterians of the Southern Presbyterian variety. We ourselves are professedly Christians of this type. If we were not such Christians, I trust that we would be honest enough to vacate our positions. But while we would see you at one with us in your type of Christianity, we want you to be honest. We would not have you profess this type of Christianity without sufficient reason for doing so. We shall pray that you may be led of the Holy Ghost and God's providence ultimately into the fulness of the truth; and ever be kept true in life to the truth so far as apprehended.

With such aid as you have here, then, give yourselves to getting such a possession of this word of truth as shall enable you to mark it out aright to the peoples to whom God shall send you. "*Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth.*"

This then is the ideal I present to each one of you: *that of being a man, a man of the kingdom of heaven, and a workman in that kingdom who can stand without shame in God's sight, rightly marking out the word of truth.* You have set your faces toward a work of more than royal dignity. Turning aside to any other work would be for you to drivel down, even though you should become kings of the earth; but to acquit yourselves worthily in this high vocation, you need a high ideal and the persistent and strenuous pursuit of it.

May God send down upon you the power of the Holy Ghost, that you may be helped to realize this ideal of *manhood, Christian manhood, skilled workmanship of which you shall not be ashamed in the divine presence,*—to the praise of the glory of His grace.