



The Princeton Theological Review

CONTENTS

John DeWitt	FREDERICK W. LOETSCHER	177
The Inspiration of the Bible	WILLIAM BRENTON GREENE JR.	235
The Problem of Mental Evolution —Part II	FINLEY D. JENKINS	277
The Testimony of the Scriptures to their own Trustworthiness	S. G. CRAIG	303
Reviews of Recent Literature		326
Survey of Periodical Literature		347

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BOOKS REVIEWED

CRABB, C. V., <i>Psychology's Challenge to Christianity</i>	328
EISELEN, F. C., <i>The Prophetic Books of the Old Testament</i>	333
FINLEY, J. H., <i>The Debt Eternal</i>	345
GETTYS, J. R., <i>Who's Who in the Universe</i>	345
HALLOCK, G. B., <i>A Modern Cyclopedia of Illustrations for all Occasions</i>	342
HILL, C. M., <i>The World's Great Religious Poetry</i>	339
HOUGH, L. H., <i>A Little Book of Sermons</i>	343
JAMES, A. G., <i>Personal Immortality</i>	328
JONES, H., <i>A Faith that Enquires</i>	329
MACALPINE, R. G., <i>What is Religion?</i>	340
MASTERMAN, J. H. B., <i>In the Footsteps of the Master</i>	342
PAGE, K., <i>War: Its Causes, Consequences and Cure</i>	347
PERENNES, H., <i>Les Psaumes traduits et commentés</i>	335
RICE, M. S., <i>The Expected Church—Twelve Sermons</i>	341
ROBINSON, T. H., <i>Prophecy and the Prophets of Ancient Israel</i>	337
ROHRBAUGH, L. G., <i>Religious Philosophy</i>	326
SQUIRES, W. A., <i>A Parish Program of Religious Education</i>	339
STONE, J. T., <i>That Friday Night</i>	339
WILLIAMS, C. D., <i>The Prophetic Ministry for Today</i>	343
WRIGHT, W. K., <i>A Student's Philosophy of Religion</i>	326

The Princeton Theological Review

APRIL, 1924

JOHN DEWITT

Dr. DeWitt was so widely known by reason of his varied and distinguished services to the Church of God, and so highly esteemed not only for what he accomplished but also for what he was, that it is altogether fitting that this REVIEW, to which he contributed so many of the products of his gifted pen, and of which he was for several years the managing editor, should contain an article commemorative of his life and work. The task of preparing such a memorial might well have been entrusted to more competent hands, and among his colleagues there are those who would have had the advantage of being able to draw upon a longer period of acquaintance with our venerated friend; but when the duty was laid upon me, I could not but welcome the appointment as giving me an opportunity of placing a wreath of affection upon the grave of one whose friendship I have cherished for years as one of my highest honors and greatest blessings. In tender and grateful regard, therefore, for his memory, but under the restrictions of sober fact—for Dr. DeWitt needs no exaggerated praise, and the simple statement of the truth will be eulogy enough—I shall sketch the salient features of his career and undertake an estimate of his character and achievements.

John DeWitt, on his father's side, sprang from one of the most ancient and influential families of the colonial period of our history. He was a lineal descendant, in the sixth generation, of that Tjerck Claessen DeWitt who, born in Westphalia in 1620, emigrated to New Amsterdam in 1656—sixteen years before the murder of his cousin, Jan DeWitt, the Grand Pensionary of Holland—and whose marriage to "Barbara Andriessen van Amsterdam" is recorded in the Register

of the Collegiate (Dutch) Reformed Church of New York City under date of April 24, 1656, and who soon became one of the leading citizens of Albany and later of Kingston.¹ The children of this union numbered thirteen, and Andries, the oldest son, was the father of an equally numerous progeny. The descendants long lived for the most part in Ulster and Dutchess Counties, New York. Many of them—the Switses, Pauldings, Clintons, and Radcliffes, as well as the DeWitts—became prominent in the political and military affairs of the Colony and State of New York. Petrus DeWitt, a great-grandson of the immigrating ancestor, was a captain in the French and Indian War, and fought under Wolfe at the capture of Quebec. Another great-grandson, Charles, as a member of the Colonial Assembly from 1768 to 1775, was “one of the nine resolute and patriotic men who voted to approve of the proceedings of the Continental Congress,” and on the outbreak of the Revolutionary War he was commissioned colonel of a regiment of minute men.² John DeWitt, the son of Petrus, served as a captain throughout the struggle for independence, and subsequently became a member of the Convention of the State of New York and voted for the adoption of the Constitution of the United States. His son, William R., the father of Dr. DeWitt, saw service as a volunteer in the Second War with Great Britain, and two of his sons, Calvin and William R., Junior, became distinguished officers connected with the medical department of the army during and after the Civil War.³ Love of liberty and patriotic devotion to the cause of representative popular government are thus seen to have been conspicuous traits of this historic family,—the appropriate fruits of those Calvinistic principles of faith and life which were inculcated in the members of the Reformed

¹ Thomas G. Evans, *The DeWitt Family of Ulster County, New York* (1886), p. 1. This work lists some 233 descendants of the immigrating ancestor, not including any who died later than 1775.

² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

³ *A Discourse on the Life and Character of Rev. William R. DeWitt, D. D., Late Pastor of the Presbyterian Church, Harrisburg, Pa.* By His Colleague, Rev. Thomas H. Robinson (Harrisburg, 1868), p. 9.

Church in Holland no less than in Scotland, England, France, and the Palatinate.

Dr. DeWitt's father, William Radcliffe DeWitt, was born at Paulding's Manor, Dutchess County, N. Y., on the twenty-fifth of February, 1792. He was named after his uncle, the Hon. William Radcliffe, of Rhinebeck, N. Y. "The family of the Radcliffes . . . were distinguished in civil life; one of them, Jacob Radcliffe, serving for several years as a judge of the Supreme Court of the State of New York; another, Peter Radcliffe, an eminent lawyer of the New York bar, and a judge of the Court of Common Pleas of Kings county; and a third, William Radcliffe, for many years United States Consul at Demarara."⁴

After completing his education at Salem Academy, Washington County, N. Y., then at Princeton and Union Colleges, and finally at the Associate Theological Seminary, New York City, the Rev. William Radcliffe DeWitt accepted in 1818 an invitation to become pastor of the Presbyterian (Market Square) Church of Harrisburg, Pa., at that time a mere borough with about twenty-five hundred inhabitants, but giving promise, as the recently established capital of the Keystone State, of becoming an influential center of the agricultural and industrial interests of the great commonwealth. The church had a steady, wholesome growth under the edifying ministrations and the efficient leadership of the young pastor, and though he was repeatedly called to other fields, he preferred to continue decade after decade in his first and, as the event was to prove, his only charge; and so it came to pass that when he was called to his reward in 1867, there were lacking but a few months to round out the full tale of fifty years of devoted service in this one parish. The confidence of the people in their minister and their affection for him were strikingly attested by the fact that when he, though an Old School Presbyterian, opposed the Exscinding Acts of the General Assembly of 1837 as unconstitutional, and renounced the jurisdiction of both of the General Assemblies of 1838,

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

his congregation by an almost unanimous vote likewise withdrew from the control of all the higher judicatories of the Church and became independent; and that when, in 1840, he applied for admission to the newly organized Presbytery of Harrisburg, in connection with the New School body, his church, with but a single dissenting voice, again followed his leadership. This episode in the life of the senior DeWitt and in the history of his church, serves to explain, in part at least, the son's well-known sympathy with the ministers and the views of the New School branch of the Presbyterian Church.

On his mother's side, too, Dr. DeWitt had a notable ancestry, one that was quite as well and as favorably known in Pennsylvania as was his father's in New York. The mother was Mary Elizabeth Wallace, the daughter of William and Eleanor Maclay Wallace, of Harrisburg. Her great-grandfather was the John Harris who in 1726 founded the settlement that was destined to be named after him. Her grandfather, William Maclay, of Scotch-Irish parentage, took an active part in raising and equipping Pennsylvania troops for the War of Independence, served for a time in the field, and later filled various offices, legislative and judicial, in his native state, sharing with Robert Morris the honor of being one of the first two representatives of Pennsylvania in the Senate of the United States. Her father established the Harrisburg Bank and was its first president. One of her brothers, Rev. Benjamin J. Wallace, became eminent in the Presbyterian Church as preacher and writer, and as editor for years of *The Presbyterian Review*. She herself was a woman of rare intellectual endowments, wide information, and excellent judgment; a leader of the religious and benevolent work of the women of the church of which her husband was the pastor; greatly admired and beloved by reason of her intelligence, tact, courtesy, and, not least, her extraordinary gift in public prayer.

It was in Harrisburg, the town for which one of his forbears had selected its picturesque location on the Susquehanna, and in which his father had been for more than two de-

cedes the honored pastor of the leading church, that John DeWitt was born, October 10, 1842. The boy grew up in a home pervaded with the atmosphere of a sincere piety, a generous culture, and a self-sacrificing benevolence. The family was large and the conditions under which it was reared made the cultivation of thrift a matter not only of prudence but also of necessity. The father's sternness and severity were admirably tempered by the mother's gentleness and sweetness. Both parents were deeply concerned for the spiritual welfare of their children, and both likewise cherished for them worthy intellectual ideals and ambitions, and by dint of rigid self-denial secured for them the means of a liberal education. Thus John was prepared for college at the Harrisburg Academy, under the principalship of the Rev. Dr. John T. Demarest and later that of Rev. A. A. Kemble. But he himself has testified: "I owe more to the daily teaching of my father, than to all other teachers of Latin and Greek."⁵ The mother, too, as the son used to take pleasure in stating, helped him in his study of the ancient classics, and deepened his love for them. Thus in his early home, religion, intellectual discipline, and refinement united to mould the mind and form the taste and determine the character of the growing boy. As to the extent to which these varied influences produced the effects which parents and teachers might legitimately have expected, it need only be said that the youth was neither over-fond of study, nor, in spite of his reverence and admiration for his father's piety and preaching, very deeply concerned for his own spiritual welfare.

His academic attainments, however, were not by any means of a mediocre character; for in the fall of 1858, being then not yet quite sixteen years of age, he entered, as one of the youngest members, the Sophomore Class of Princeton College,—the college to which his father had gone, but which he had exchanged, on account of the disturbing influences of a

⁵ From the written data which he submitted to the Rev. Joseph H. Dulles, editor of the *Biographical Catalogue of Princeton Theological Seminary*, who kindly gave me access to them.

rebellion of the students, for Union College; the college, also, of his maternal grandfather, and of various nearer and more remote relatives. His life at Nassau Hall was that of a ruddy-faced, high-spirited, sociable, and fun-loving youth, who had a broad interest in everything human, who found the higher mathematics too difficult to be much of a means of grace, either intellectual or moral, but who, while caring nothing for scholastic honors, found great pleasure and profit in the philosophical disciplines, and especially in the Greek and Latin courses, but most of all in his extensive private reading of the standard English authors. One of his classmates writes:

DeWitt was one of the most likeable men in the class of '61. He made full and free personal contribution to the best sort of comradeship with his fellows. If a good thing were going, whether of sport or more serious obligation, John was generally and prominently in evidence. He excelled chiefly in the literary line; this was indicated by the fact that he was chosen to represent Whig Hall on the Junior Orator stage.⁶

After graduation from college in 1861, Mr. DeWitt entered the office of David Fleming, Esq., of Harrisburg, and for eight months gave himself to the study of law. He had not yet made a public profession of the Christian faith. In his native city he had enjoyed a personal acquaintance with many of the leaders in business and politics of the State of Pennsylvania, and no doubt the world of affairs had made a much more powerful appeal to him than to many among his classmates whose lives had been more secluded and scholastic. Many of his relatives had attained eminence in the legal profession, and it was natural for him to think of following their example. And certainly those who knew the mature man—his quick grasp of abstract principles, his fine powers of explication and argument, his rare gift of clear, sinewy, and graceful expression, his knowledge of men and affairs, his worldly wisdom, his sturdy common sense, his sobriety and fairness in judgment, his love of righteousness and scorn of sophistries and shams, and withal the impressive dignity and charm of his person—will have no difficulty in imagining that

⁶ MS. letter of the Rev. James M. Ludlow, D. D., of East Orange, N. J.

he could readily have become as distinguished in forensic as he was in pulpit eloquence, or that he would have adorned the bench in one of our highest courts.

I have been unable to ascertain the circumstances that led him to exchange his legal for his theological studies. His "conversion" must have been somewhat sudden; for he himself is authority for the statement that he went "to the Seminary immediately after uniting with the Church by profession"; and he further declares that "when converted" he "gave up law and at once began" his course in divinity. As to the date of the event, he says explicitly that it took place when he was "nineteen years, four months" old; which, if it is to be taken exactly, and not as a mere allusion to the time of his matriculation as a theological student, would be March 10, 1862,—the very day on which he registered as an entering student at Princeton Seminary.⁷ In any event his conversion was a change in his life as thorough as it was decisive. It expressed the calm and deliberate choice of a man who has reached a conclusion after the most conscientious consideration of his duty; and accordingly, with that straightforwardness and sanity that always characterized him in his adult years, he began "at once" to prepare himself for the Gospel ministry.

As has already appeared, his arrival in the Seminary in the spring of 1862 was within two months of the close of the session. One wonders how he adjusted himself to the several courses then nearing their conclusion; unfortunately the Minutes of the Faculty throw no light on this interesting question. Certain it is that he gave himself with earnestness and fidelity to his tasks. He was specially interested in the departments of Systematic Theology and Ecclesiastical History; the former taught by Dr. Charles Hodge, then at the very height of his influence in the Seminary and the Church at large; the latter by Dr. James C. Moffat, who had been Dr. DeWitt's teacher in the Greek classics at Princeton College and who in 1861 became the Helena Professor of Church History in the Sem-

⁷ See note 5.

inary. In the chair of Biblical and Oriental Literature Dr. William Henry Green had served since 1851, and was widely and favorably known by his many articles in *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* and in *The British and Foreign Evangelical Review*, and by the publication in 1861 of his *Grammar of the Hebrew Language*. Dr. Alexander T. McGill occupied the chair of Ecclesiastical, Homiletic, and Pastoral Theology. In 1861 the youngest of the five professors of that period, Dr. Caspar Wistar Hodge, had begun his distinguished service in the New Testament department.

Two of Mr. DeWitt's fellow students have kindly given me some of their recollections and impressions of him in his Seminary days. Dean Edward H. Griffin, of Johns Hopkins University, writes :

My acquaintance with him began in the Seminary year 1863-4, when we sat at the same table in the old Refectory. It was an interesting body of men who were brought together in this way—Samuel H. Kellogg, George S. Bishop, John DeWitt, S. S. Mitchell, George L. Raymond, James Gibson Johnson, and others. The table conversation was apt to be a little over-serious . . . DeWitt was by no means ill-qualified or indisposed to take part in these discussions, but he was interested in other things besides theology, and he would often introduce some irrelevancy which furnished a welcome and wholesome diversion. His greater knowledge of men and things enabled him to contribute to our common life much that was interesting and important. His sense of humor—throughout life one of his most charming characteristics—was in his youthful days fairly exuberant. He abounded in good stories and apt illustrations. He had a power of good-natured raillery, which, while never wounding any one's feelings, was often more effective than argument. But under whatever disguise of playfulness or seeming secularity, the underlying seriousness and earnestness of John DeWitt were never, even in those early days, hard to discern. When he chose the Christian ministry as his vocation, he did so with the full consent and concurrence of his mind and his conscience, and in this choice he never wavered, and this sense of consecration he never lost.

Prof. George L. Raymond speaks of the beginning of his almost sixty years of friendship with Dr. DeWitt in these terms :

I was soon drawn to him by other traits [besides his youth] which, at first, were more or less hidden,—by his unaffected

naturalness ; his modesty and often amusing frankness with reference to himself and his own defects ; his keen insight into the thoughts and motives of others ; his open-minded interest in their theories, no matter how unusual ; his hearty welcome for the least of their endeavors to obtain and express the truth ; his helpful sympathy extended to their aspirations ; and his thorough appreciation of their ideals, notwithstanding the fact that the difference between these and their real attainments could not possibly be concealed.

Quite amusing— and, to beginners in the homiletic art, if there be any such among the readers of this article, instructive—is this same informant's account of Mr. DeWitt's preparation of his first sermon. When asked one day how he was getting on with it, he replied : " 'On' is the right word. You see, I don't know much yet ; and what I don't know, I have to make up for by using words ; and what I don't understand myself, I have to spend time in making other people understand." Later he reported on the progressive evolution of his discourse : "I tried to read it yesterday and—I'm telling you the truth—I don't think that I could have delivered it inside of about three hours." When the expediency of cutting it up into half a dozen sermons was recommended to him, he said : "I did better than that ; I tore it into more nearly half a hundred, and put it into a waste basket where it may be of some use to somebody. But," he added, "it's been a good experience. It's taught me one thing even in my Seminary days—not to put all my eggs of thought into a single nest."

In April, 1864, Mr. DeWitt was licensed by the First Presbytery (Old School) of New York. In view, however, of his youthfulness—he was not yet yet twenty-two—and in view of the broken character of his theological course, due not only to his late entrance upon it in the spring of 1862, but also to a spell of sickness he had in his last term, he decided to devote the next year to graduate work at Union Theological Seminary, New York. He often in later times spoke of the solid benefits and the many satisfactions he found in this additional preparation for his life-work, and in his writings he repeatedly refers especially to two of the professors—Henry

B. Smith and William G. T. Shedd—as his “revered” teachers. To the latter, particularly, he owed much, and one of the most engaging traits of his character is found in his frequent and generous acknowledgment of the indebtedness. Indeed, it is not too much to say that Dr. Shedd, by his oral instructions and yet more by his varied literary and theological works, exerted the strongest and most important formative influence on the intellectual life of this future pastor and professor. Dr. Shedd’s rich general culture; his ardent love of literature; his ample and accurate scholarship; his philosophic acumen and speculative vigor; his synthetic rather than analytic elaboration of the Christian dogmas; his Calvinism, lofty and rigorous, yet fully recognizing the value of Coleridge’s distinction between the function of the reason and that of the understanding in matters of faith, and likewise that between the logical or scientific and the moral or experiential aspects of religious truth; his broad historical-mindedness; his able advocacy of the realistic as against the representative theory of the Adamic headship of the race, and his masterly presentation of those doctrinal developments in which realism most plausibly asserted its claims—the Nicene Trinitarianism, the Augustinian Anthropology, and the Anselmic Soteriology; above all, the typically Puritan spirituality that determined his whole *Weltanschauung*,—these were some of the elements of the ethical and especially the intellectual personality of Dr. Shedd, and of the products of his theological genius, which made an indelible impression upon the young licentiate from Harrisburg and turned the admiring pupil into the devoted follower and friend. Opinions will differ in matters of this sort, but in the judgment of the present writer, the finest piece of work that Dr. DeWitt ever did—the work which shows his faculties of mind and heart co-operating in most genial fashion, which most adequately reveals his philosophic bent and his theological ability, his keenness of insight, his wide and generous sympathies, his breadth of view, and the spacious manner in which he was wont to treat his biographical and historical themes, his judicial temper, his sincerity

and candor, as well as his strength and charm as a writer—the work that shows him at his very best is his altogether admirable article on Dr. Shedd contributed to *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review* in April, 1895. It is a worthy handling of a noble subject, and though objective and almost impersonal in form, it radiates the author's grateful appreciation of his chief intellectual and spiritual benefactor.

As has already been said, Mr. DeWitt became a licentiate in April, 1864. The sermon which he delivered before the Presbytery on that occasion as one of the parts of trial was a noteworthy discourse, attended, so far at least as the preacher was concerned, with important results. Having for some time had difficulties with the doctrine of eternal retribution, he obtained the consent of the presbyterial authorities to make this question the theme of his "popular lecture." His thorough and convincing discussion of the problem, combined with his great earnestness, made a profound impression upon his hearers, an impression that was only deepened by his youthfulness—he was not yet twenty-two years of age. Not only was he allowed, contrary to the usual custom at such services, to present his exposition in its entirety, but soon thereafter, through the mediation of some elders who had heard his discourse, he was invited to supply the pulpit of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church during the following summer, an appointment which he fulfilled in so acceptable a manner, that when he entered Union Seminary in the fall, he had a quite unusual reputation as a popular young preacher. Certain it was that at the conclusion of his year of graduate study he would not have long to wait for a call to a suitable pastorate.

Such a call came to him from the Presbyterian Church (New School), of Irvington, N. Y., and here, on the ninth of June, 1865, he was ordained by the Third Presbytery of New York. A long and notable career in the ministry of the Gospel was thus begun in this beautiful town on the Hudson. The parish was one admirably fitted to give free scope to the young pastor's exceptional talents and special aptitudes. One

who knew intimately both him and his work in those days informs us:⁸

His settlement was a peculiarly congenial one. In his congregation were men of prominence in the Presbyterian Church and in the business and social life of New York. Young as he was, he met these men of force and distinction on equal terms, and quickly won their respect and good will . . . The years at Irvington witnessed a great maturing of DeWitt's mind and character. Wide reading, association with interesting people from whom much was to be learned, an increasing sense of the responsibilities of the Christian ministry, developed in him qualities and resources which were a fit preparation for the great change which came to him when he left his suburban pastorate for the arduous tasks of a great city church.

In his report, made in 1867, to the secretary of the class of 1864 of Princeton Seminary, Mr. DeWitt wrote:⁹ "We have given to benevolent societies about \$9000 each year, exclusive of individual donations, which would largely increase the amount. We have two flourishing Sabbath Schools. I try to know all the children of my church, and to speak to them individually on the subject of religion. My leading encouragements have been my own increased study of the Gospel, the good attendance of my people upon the ordinances of the house of God, and their attention to the word preached. I think the ministerial life proves as favorable to heart culture as I had expected."

The Irvington pastorate extended from 1865 to 1869. In 1867 Mr. DeWitt received a call to the Park Street Church of Boston. This call he declined; but when, two years later, the pulpit of the Central Church of the same city was offered to him, he accepted the invitation, and thus became the pastor of one of the most influential Congregational churches in New England. The responsibilities which he thus assumed were fairly oppressive in their magnitude. The congregation had gone deeply into debt for the erection of their magnif-

⁸ Dean Griffin, in the letter above referred to.

⁹ *A History of the Class that Graduated at Princeton Theological Seminary in the Year 1864; with an Account of the Triennial Reunion of the Class, and Biographical Sketches of its Eighty Members.* Easton, 1868.

icent Gothic edifice, only recently completed; and one of the first tasks awaiting the new leader was the reduction of the mortgage on the property. He succeeded in raising \$200,000 for this purpose. The exacting demands made upon his pulpit ministrations by his highly cultivated parishioners, the extensive pastoral work required of him, and the many outside duties devolving upon him by reason of his official position bore heavily upon him. But his health was vigorous; his intellectual resources, constantly increased by diligent, if not always systematic study, were more than sufficient to meet both the expectations of his people and his own high standards of homiletic excellence; and his association with his fellow ministers—especially with Dr. Thayer, of Newport, R. I., with whom he was wont to exchange pulpits quite often—was an unfailing source of delightful and stimulating friendships. It is not surprising, therefore, that when, in 1903, on the occasion of the delivery of his oration on “Jonathan Edwards,” he revisited New England, the six laborious years (1869-1876) of his Boston pastorate should appear to him in the long retrospect as “exceptionally happy” and as having been filled “with unnumbered acts of kindness from the living and the dead.”¹⁰ Foremost no doubt, among the speaker’s recollections as he uttered that last clause, was the event that may here appropriately be recorded as the one that meant more to him than did any other since his acceptance of Christ and his entrance into the ministry,—his marriage, on August 20, 1874, to Laura Aubrey Beaver, the daughter of the Hon. Thomas Beaver and Elizabeth (Wilkins) Beaver, of Danville, Pa.; a happy union, destined, however, to continue for but eighteen years, when it was terminated by the wife’s sudden death.

In 1876, Mr. DeWitt received a call from the Third Pres-

¹⁰ *Jonathan Edwards. Union Meeting of the Berkshire North and South Conferences, Stockbridge, Mass., October 5, 1903. Oration by John DeWitt. And Other Addresses.* [Reprinted in *The Princeton Theological Review*, Jan. 1904; also in *Biblical and Theological Studies by Members of the Faculty of Princeton Theological Seminary* (New York, 1912), pp. 109-136.]

byterian Church of Pittsburgh. But while the arrangements for his installation were still pending, he felt constrained to withdraw his acceptance, in view of the admonition of his medical adviser that residence in "the smoky city" would be highly injurious to the precarious condition of Mrs. DeWitt's health. Shortly thereafter, the Tenth Church of Philadelphia extended a call to him, and that same year he entered upon this, his third and last, and by far his most important pastorate.

The Tenth Church of Philadelphia, at that time situated at the corner of Twelfth and Walnut Streets, had been organized in 1829, and was composed mainly of families from the First, Second, and Sixth Churches of the city. Its first pastor was the Rev. Dr. Thomas McAuley. After his resignation in the spring of 1833, the Rev. Henry Augustus Boardman, a licentiate who had just completed his course at Princeton Seminary, was called to the pastorate. He was ordained and installed on November 8, 1833, and held this position till May, 1876, when ill health compelled him to relinquish his charge, and he was made pastor emeritus, a relation which he sustained till his death in June, 1880. Under his long and distinguished ministry, the pulpit of the Tenth Church became one of the most eminent in the entire denomination. His exceptional talents and the industry with which he cultivated them; his lofty character; his ability as a preacher; his fidelity in the pastoral office; his sound judgment and practical wisdom; his catholic spirit and his generous devotion to the benevolent activities of his parish and of the Church at large; his commanding influence in the Presbytery, Synod, and General Assembly united to make him one of the most highly esteemed ministers of the Presbyterian Church.¹¹

To follow Dr. Boardman after so long and successful a

¹¹ *A Sermon Commemorative of the Life and Work of the Rev. Henry Augustus Boardman, D. D., Late Pastor of the Tenth Presbyterian Church, of Philadelphia. Preached by his Successor, the Rev. John DeWitt, D. D., Nov. 28, 1880. Philadelphia, 1881. (Bound with Address at the Funeral of the Rev. Henry Augustus Boardman, D. D. By the Rev. Prof. A. A. Hodge, D. D., June 21, 1880.)*

pastorate was assuredly no easy undertaking. He had, indeed, resigned his authority, but "his influence he could not resign." Moreover, his position as pastor emeritus, his continued presence with his people in their religious assemblies and social gatherings, and their extraordinary veneration and devotion to him might readily have limited the usefulness and marred the happiness of any successor who, whatever other qualifications he might have had, had been deficient in considerateness and tact. But the relation between Dr. Boardman and Mr. DeWitt—or as we ought now to call him, Doctor DeWitt, for in 1877, the year after his coming to Philadelphia, Princeton College made him a doctor of divinity—the relation between the two pastors was about as near the ideal of perfection as could be conceived. In their official record the trustees of the church testify:

A successor to his [Dr. Boardman's] place was elected just to his mind, and it was beautiful to witness the intercourse which subsisted between the outgoing and the incoming pastor—fatherly kindness on one side and filial devotion on the other. The ministrations of Dr. DeWitt probably gave to no one more pleasure than to his venerable predecessor.¹²

And Dr. DeWitt himself says: "He cordially welcomed me to the pulpit which his distinguished pastorate had made eminent. He was untiring in his endeavors to make his friends my friends. His mature wisdom was at my disposal, but only as I sought it; and he was only too fearful lest, by expressing his opinions, he might seem to proffer advice. Whatever service I asked of him he rendered joyfully, I may almost say, gratefully."¹³ It was a relationship which may, indeed, fairly be regarded as unique. If the retiring minister did all he could to secure the hearty support of the congregation for his successor, the latter in turn scrupulously regarded and promoted the former's claim on the gratitude and affection of the parishioners. He invariably, in his public and private references to Dr. Boardman, spoke of him to the people as "your pastor," and he found delight in practicing the most generous

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 30.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

renunciation of official privileges in favor of his predecessor, insisting, for example, that the pastor emeritus was the proper person to solemnize the marriage ceremony in all those cases in which either of the contracting parties, or, as not seldom happened, their parents and even their grandparents were, or had been, members of the Tenth Church. In any event, such misgivings as the younger man may have had in regard to the wisdom of his undertaking this charge under the conditions given, were destined to vanish completely during the four years of his delightful association with his "colleague."

In one respect the new pastor was particularly fortunate. His predecessor had taught his parishioners that among all the claims upon the minister's time and strength those of the pulpit must be regarded as paramount, it being understood that even these "must yield to the demands of the sick, the desponding, the awakened, and the bereaved."¹⁴ Now these were precisely the principles on which the young pastor had conducted his work in his former charges, and he was happy in the assurance that they represented the convictions, if not always the desires, of his congregation. Accordingly, as he had begun at Irvington, so now in Philadelphia he continued to be an attentive and faithful, but not an indulgent pastor. His visits to the homes of his parishioners were highly valued and much enjoyed, but they were not more frequent than the obligations of his office required. His conception of the relative importance of the duties of the preacher and those of the pastor kept him from the mistake of neglecting the study for the parlor or the street. Nor had he any ambition to be regarded primarily as a "good mixer" or energetic "manager" of parish affairs. He was only too glad to let the trustees attend to the financial interests of the congregation, and the elders to supervise what too often becomes the war department in our system of ecclesiastical government, the music of the church. But he was prompt, conscientious, and impartial in the discharge of the responsibilities of the pastoral office. The soul of honor and courtesy, governed always by

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

the most delicate sense of propriety, he was well fitted, by his natural sympathy and tenderness, his knowledge of the Bible, his cultivated moral and religious feeling, his rich and varied experience as a man of the world and a man of God, to apply the consolations and the admonitions of the Gospel in his private ministrations to the members of his congregation.

But it was as a preacher that he excelled. Like his predecessor, he made his pulpit a throne of power, and like him, and indeed largely by a similar combination of personal qualities, native and acquired, he exerted an influence which, according to his successor,¹⁵ soon made him *facile princeps* among his brethren in the Presbyterian ministry of Philadelphia. In that notable group that included, besides others, Lawrence M. Colfelt at the First Church, Elias R. Beadle and later John S. MacIntosh at the Second, John H. Munro at the Central, Henry C. McCook at the Tabernacle, Stephen W. Dana at the Walnut Street, William P. Breed at the West Spruce Street, Charles A. Dickey at the Calvary, and Charles Wadsworth at the Clinton Street Immanuel Church, there were some who could more readily stir the emotions of an audience, some who had more conspicuous popular gifts and a more enthusiastic personal following, some who touched the work of the Church at more points and more deeply than he did, and several who by reason of their well-established leadership in the Presbytery were more widely influential than he was; but in the range and elevation of his intellectual life, in the extent and intrinsic worth of his culture, in his ability to commend the Gospel to people long accustomed to the ministrations of an exceptionally scholarly pulpit, he had no equal among his brethren in the city.

Dr. DeWitt had a well-marked individuality as a preacher. From Dr. Shedd he had learned that eloquence becomes real by reason of its ethical rather than its æsthetic elements; that if it is not rooted in convictions, it degenerates into mere elocution and rhetoric. And like his teacher, he conceived the sermon as a didactic oration founded on revealed truth and

¹⁵ The Rev. William Brenton Greene, D. D.

designed, not to move the sensibilities or the passions, but through the understanding and the conscience to move the will to appropriate religious activity. Its primary object is not to excite emotion but to produce impressions; not to entertain, as does the drama or the lyric poem, but to inform the mind, to convince the reason, to influence the voluntary, as distinguished from the purely constitutional, affections of the hearer, and thus to determine his will.¹⁶ His preaching was thus thoroughly objective, and he was by eminence an intellectual rather than an emotional preacher. He belonged emphatically to the first and not to the second of the two groups into which John Henry Newman divided preachers: those who have something to say and those who have to say something. For him the prime concern was to discuss his chosen subject, to unfold its content, to commend its truths, to enforce its obligations on the conscience. Duty was the clarion call,—not duty in the low sense of a mere naturalistic morality, but duty in the high spiritual sense as enjoined by the Gospel and including the whole nature of man, ethical and religious.

These fundamental principles of his homiletic practice are conspicuously present in the first of his extant sermons which I have come across, that entitled *The Religious Life and the Daily Life: The Relations between Them* (Boston, 1872). And they are no less obvious in that substantial volume of twenty-seven *Sermons on the Christian Life* which he published in 1885 (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons). Of these he says in his Preface: "They are not discussions of doctrine; they are sermons on various aspects and elements of human life. These are treated in their relations to Christ. . . . But the doctrines of Christianity, though not expounded, are implied. They underlie and support each discourse."

¹⁶ *Sensational Preaching*. By the Rev. John DeWitt, D. D. (A paper read before the Presbyterian Ministerial Association of Philadelphia, March 7, 1881; in *The Presbyterian Journal*, March 31, 1881; also in *The Catholic Presbyterian*, Nov. 18, 1881.) Cf. also *The Homiletic Value of Wordsworth's Poetry*, in *The Presbyterian Review*, III (1882), pp. 241-263.

We have taken occasion to re-read these sermons, and they confirm the impression made by the many others which it has been our privilege to hear Dr. DeWitt deliver in the Chapel of the Seminary and elsewhere, that his preaching was exceptionally interesting, instructive, and edifying. As compared with some of the many similar publications of our day—those thin, shallow, incoherent sentimentalizings on mere splinters of the sacred text, with scarcely a distinctively Christian idea to relieve the bald naturalism substituted for the historic Gospel—the sermons of Dr. DeWitt are substantial and comprehensive discussions of the salient principles of evangelical religion, with special reference to its ethical requirements. They are impressive, first of all, by reason of the weightiness of their content.

But they are not heavy sermons. Their simple structure; their logical, clean-cut headings; the orderly development of every division; the frequent summing up of the main points; the skilful application to the everyday needs of men; the abundant illustrative materials, drawn from nature, common life, history, literature, and especially the Bible; and, above all, the clearness, straightforwardness, force, and charm of the preacher's style make the messages as attractive in form as they are impressive in content. Rarely controversial or polemic in aim and method, though frequently apologetic, he ordinarily preferred to let the positive statement of his evangelical convictions suffice both to attest his own profound confidence in the scheme of grace as set forth in the teachings of the Reformed Churches, and to win the hearer's cordial acceptance of the truth as thus interpreted. He spoke seldom of his own religious experience, but who that ever heard him could doubt that the Gospel that he commended was a power in his own life?

And on the purely formal side, many of these sermons might profitably be studied as models of the homiletic art. Dr. DeWitt had the rare knack of hitting upon the natural lines of cleavage in a biblical statement. He did not break the bones of his text, but deftly sought its joints and dissected them with the same ease and skill with which he carved a roast fowl

at his dinner table. Many of his sermonic divisions, like the best of Robertson's, are so strikingly appropriate that they have an air of inescapable finality: one feels that there is no other equally satisfactory mode of handling the same passage. Nor is there anything meretricious either in the structure or in the adornment of the exposition. There are no cunningly devised antitheses that are too sharply pointed to be strictly true; no superlatives that pervert the meaning by an unwarranted exaggeration; no negations that intimate that nothing besides the matter in hand is worth considering; no purple patches that are obviously lugged in to conceal a want of thought or lend a fictitious splendor to some trivial and irrelevant commonplace. The style is the man: sincere, veracious, dignified, direct; expressing in simple, strong, graceful speech the truth that he has made so thoroughly his own that the coinage in which he conveys it must needs bear his own image and superscription.

On more than one occasion, Dr. DeWitt himself characterized his preaching as too intellectual; as being ill adapted to move the religious feelings of his hearers. The criticism, even his most ardent admirers will admit, is quite just. It is grounded, it will be observed, in the very merits of his homiletic theory. It represents the defect of a virtue. The fact is that his didactic purpose was so dominant that it overbore all else. The fire of the orator was too much subdued by the discursiveness of the teacher. The analysis of a subject was often too minute to permit a free use of those forceful climaxes which belong more naturally to the broader, synthetic method of the topical preacher. His imagination, too, it must be admitted, was receptive rather than creative, so that his style, with all its orderliness, movement, and finish, its choice diction and its lofty aim, had little of that pictorial vividness, that graphic power, that charm of imagery which only a lively fancy or a brooding imagination can supply; that rhetorical quality which enables a preacher to suggest much more than what he makes intelligible to the understanding, and which gives his speech an emotional warmth that leads the hearer

not only to conceive the truth as a bare idea but also to perceive it as a living reality; that superlative gift that attests the sovereignty of genius alike in the poet and in the preacher.

But no mere perusal of Dr. DeWitt's sermons can give an adequate conception of his power and attractiveness in the pulpit. This is said with special reference to his more usual mode of preaching—that of reading from a full manuscript. From an early period of his ministry, he began to use another method also, that of speaking without notes, or with only a meagre outline before him; and this became his usual practice for the midweek prayer meeting and likewise, in his Philadelphia pastorate, for the Sunday afternoon service. With this method, however, he never acquired the effectiveness which he had with the other. His success as an extemporaneous speaker was only moderate. Facile and fluent as he was with his pen, his offhand discourses lacked the precision, symmetry, and polish, as well as the spontaneity, freedom, and momentum that so eminently characterized his written style. But he read his sermons exceptionally well. Though he seldom raised his eyes from his manuscript, it would scarcely occur to any one to regard the paper on the desk as a non-conductor between the speaker and his hearers: so vital to him, and so engaging to them, was the whole process of the delivery.

Much of the attractiveness was obviously due to the impressive and winning personality of the preacher. He was as generously endowed in his physical as in his intellectual and spiritual being. Though but little above the medium height, his person was of full size and well-proportioned, the embodiment of manly vigor and beauty. His noble countenance, with its majestic brow and its handsome features, its ruddy glow of health, and its mobile responsiveness to every movement of the animating spirit, was a genuine delight to the eye, whether one chanced to get but a glimpse of it on the street or gave it a more leisurely scrutiny in the parlor, the classroom, or the sanctuary. And there was that in his well-groomed appearance and his courtly bearing which gave his presence an unusual distinction; a certain weight and force of personality

which invariably inspired respect and which often made even his superiors in office and authority yield him a voluntary or involuntary deference.

Nor may we forget to mention his voice as one of the elements of his effectiveness and charm as a speaker. It was an excellent organ, bell-like in its clearness and resonance, of exquisite quality, and admirably adapted to his purpose as a reader. Occasionally, indeed, under the stress of his earnestness, its natural sweetness and flexibility were sacrificed, and it became noticeably strident. But in general it was well modulated, and was capable alike of powerful effects and of the most tender and beautiful cadences. It showed to best advantage in the sermonic passages that called for smooth and quick narration, in the subdued notes of the hortatory appeals, and especially in his use of the majestic language of the Psalms and the Prophets and the great passages from the ancient liturgies in which he was wont to clothe his adorations and thanksgivings in public prayer. It was a voice that was well suited to the art he had of giving dignity and alluring beauty even to the common words of human speech. There was, indeed, more of truth than humor in the remark which a ministerial friend of his in Philadelphia once made to him: "DeWitt, you would be eloquent in reading an almanac."

And the influence of the written and spoken word was heightened by the energetic and graceful delivery. Every syllable was distinctly enunciated, and the proper distribution of the emphasis left no room for doubt as to the relation of any part of a sentence to the whole. The gestures, though few and not always significant, were uniformly pleasing, and added considerably to the general effectiveness of the reading. But what one was most conscious of in listening to Dr. DeWitt in the pulpit was the indefinable power and grace that emanate from a personality richly endowed and fully consecrated to the noblest task of the true servant of God: one instinctively felt that he was sincerely and faithfully using his high talents and attainments, all the resources of his knowledge and experience, to discharge what he regarded as a sacred trust, that

of trying to lead his fellow men to a better understanding of the Gospel that had become dear to him as life itself, and to a closer fellowship with Him whom he sought by his preaching as by all his personal influence to glorify as his own and the world's Redeemer and Lord. He courageously and persistently called men to Christ, not by way of appending a merely formal addition to the body of his discourse, but by showing how the truth brought forth from the text itself, constrained the hearer to consider his personal relation to the Savior. The conclusion of his noble sermon on "The Value of a Religious Atmosphere"¹⁷ is typical in form and spirit of many such closing appeals:

So that I have to urge again, as always, the one great duty, which it is the mission of the pulpit to urge from week to week; the duty of living near to Him, whose spirit is the life and light of men. How do we need to pray to, and commune with, and meditate upon our Lord! Without Him—let us learn it anew to-day—without Him, without His spirit within us, we can do nothing. . . . This is the blessed life to which we call you when we bid you come to Christ. This is the mission of Christianity; and this the method of its benediction. Men and women, whose hearts swell at times with nobles aims, it is in Christ alone, that they can be achieved. Only when you live in Him, the Light of the world, can you also become the light of the world."

There is one aspect of Dr. DeWitt's Philadelphia ministry which calls for special consideration not only because it greatly enhanced the power and influence of his pulpit, but also because it was one of the chief causes that led to his becoming a theological professor. Having cultivated for years his natural fondness for historical reading, he now sought to give to his congregation the benefits of his broad and intensive studies in this field. He therefore made it his practice to deliver, at his Sunday afternoon service during successive winters, brief series of sermons on some of the outstanding personalities and movements in the history of the Church. These discourses promptly received and uniformly sustained a deep and wide-spread interest on the part of intelligent and thoughtful hearers. They were attended and gratefully appreciated

¹⁷ *Sermons on the Christian Life*, pp. 179, 181.

not only by large numbers of his own parishioners but likewise by many of the ministers of the city who were free to come to an afternoon service, and by many professional men and women, some of whom were members of other churches, but some of whom were not regular attendants at any other religious services. As is shown by many of his published addresses, some of them dating from his pastorates, but more of them from the latter half of his ministerial life, Dr. DeWitt had an unusual gift for the popular presentation of biographical and historical themes. Avoiding the extremes, on the one hand, of a merely superficial recital of the facts, and, on the other, of a too detailed and erudite discussion of them, he skilfully seized, vividly set forth, and judiciously estimated the salient elements of his subject. It was his custom, after he became a professor of church history, to close the work of the department with a brief talk on the importance and value of continued historical studies to the minister of the Gospel, and then, by way of illustrating the homiletic use to which such materials can be put, he would read one of his own historical sermons. In my Senior year at Princeton Seminary the subject presented was "Athanasius," and to this day I retain a vivid recollection of the inspiring and instructive character of this discourse, and of the deep religious impression it made upon us all. It was marked by the preacher's customary breadth of treatment: the ante-Nicene background of the great theologian's life, the distinctive qualities of his personality, his leading arguments for the Deity of Christ, and the main achievements of his career were graphically and impressively portrayed, and finally the practical lessons to be gleaned from his character and work were succinctly stated. The wealth of knowledge, brought to view in a manner suggesting great reserves of information and power; the skill with which the varied materials were marshalled, now for simple narration, now for the development of logically connected doctrinal propositions, and now for brief but spirited appeals to the religious interests of the hearers; above all, the felicity and splendor of the diction, the ease and fulness,

the vigor and grace of the style—all united to make us feel that if only we could ever approach such excellence in this mode of presenting the Gospel, it would indeed be a service worth rendering to any congregation to which we might be called.¹⁸

Dr. DeWitt never sought special occasions of public address, but when they were thrust upon him, he proved himself more than equal to their demands. It fell to his lot to deliver many funeral and memorial sermons, for members of his churches and for his brethren in the ministry, a considerable number of which have been preserved.¹⁹ These addresses admirably reveal his large culture, his wide human sympathies, his generosity of spirit, his tact and delicacy of feeling, and his rare felicity in adapting his rhetorical gifts to the proprieties of such solemn and tender services. And he was often invited to speak at church anniversaries and celebrations of ecclesiastical events that had a more general significance. To some of these discourses we may conveniently refer in other connections,²⁰ but this is the appropriate place to mention his

¹⁸ It is to be regretted that no specimens of Dr. DeWitt's "historical sermons" have been preserved. But some conception of his method is given in his article on "The Relations of Church History to Preaching" in *The Princeton Theological Review*, V (1907), pp. 98-112.

¹⁹ Besides the sermon on Dr. Boardman, already referred to, we may here mention the following: *Address at the Funeral of Mrs. Edward Coffin of Irvington, N. Y.* (New York, 1867; we have been unable to find a copy of this address, but Dr. DeWitt himself included it in a list of his publications which he submitted to the Editor of the *Biographical Catalogue of the Seminary*: see note 5); *Sermon on the Death of Charles E. Morris, Esq.* (Philadelphia, 1879); *Address at the Funeral of the Rev. Charles Wadsworth, D. D., Pastor of Clinton Street Immanuel Church of Philadelphia* (1882); *The Rev. Dr. George T. Purves as a Christian Pastor* (offprint from *The Evangelist*, Nov. 7, 1901); *James Ormsbee Murray, D. D., LL. D., A Memorial Sermon* (Princeton University Press, 1899); Discourse at the Funeral of Prof. William M. Paxton in the First Presbyterian Church, Princeton, N. J., Nov. 30, 1904 (in *In Memoriam William Miller Paxton, D. D., LL. D.*; New York, 1905). To these may be added his "Obituary Note. The Rev. Prof. Thomas Harvey Skinner, D. D., LL. D.," in *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, III (1892), pp. 514 ff.

²⁰ We may here, by way of completing the record of Dr. DeWitt's pub-

celebrated paper on "The Worship of the Reformed Churches," read at the Second General Council of the Presbyterian Alliance, at Philadelphia, in September, 1880.²¹ It is a noble vindication of the simplicity and spirituality that characterize the worship of the most thoroughly evangelical of the Protestant Churches; of the courageous and determined divorce which they made on principle between fine art and religion, except in the case of sacred song and sacred eloquence, and of the necessity and propriety of bringing the truth of God as revealed in Holy Scripture to the place of honor in the sanctuary. It is a brief but scholarly, discriminating, and fair-minded discussion of the true relation between æsthetics and worship. The impression which it produced was profound. Young as its author was in comparison with many of the venerable celebrities from beyond the sea as well as from Canada and from all parts of this country, he was nevertheless regarded as being, not only in learning and culture and in rhetorical ability, but also in the sheer force and grace of his personality, quite the equal of any who had come to take part in the proceedings of that assembly or to honor the occasion with their presence.

Dr. DeWitt in his Philadelphia pastorate was, therefore, conspicuously a man of growing intellectual and spiritual power. With no special aptitude or fondness for the mere routine of ecclesiastical business, whether in his own church or in presbytery, and always eager to husband his time and strength for the studies that he deemed indispensable to his highest usefulness, and that also gave him the greatest enjoyment, he continued, as he had begun in his early ministry, to be a diligent reader of biblical, theological, and general literature, and especially also of history, sacred and secular, and likewise to give his faculties, thus enlarged and enriched by

lications during his Philadelphia pastorate, mention his address *Words for Workers: A Plea for the Young Men's Christian Association*, delivered at the twenty-second anniversary of the Philadelphia Y. M. C. A., Feb. 6, 1877 (Philadelphia, 1877).

²¹ Published by the Presbyterian Journal Company of Philadelphia.

systematic cultivation, the discipline of much independent reflection. It is not strange, therefore, that he was highly esteemed not only by his own congregation, but also by the Church at large. We have already referred to the honor which Princeton College conferred upon him in 1877 by making him a doctor of divinity. In 1881 he was made a Director of Princeton Seminary. And now in 1882 he received a call which gave wide and merited recognition to the exceptional culture which he had acquired and to the notable attainments which he had made as a student of history, as well as to the ability, faithfulness, and success which had marked his three pastorates; a call the acceptance of which would mean an entirely new form of ministerial service,—the call to become Professor of Biblical and Ecclesiastical History at Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati.

Dr. DeWitt was now in his fortieth year. His naturally vigorous health had become somewhat impaired during the latter half of his ministry at the Tenth Church; he had repeatedly experienced acute attacks of sickness, that made it necessary for him to secure substitutes at all of his services. To those who knew him at Princeton and can recall how much he was wont, even before he entered upon his seventh decade, to talk of his advancing age and the necessity of his preparing for its increasing hazards, it will doubtless occasion no surprise to learn that even in his late thirties he had a quite abnormal concern about his physical condition and an almost morbid dread of a premature decline. The onerous duties of his pastorate fairly oppressed him at times, and occasionally, too, his sensitive spirit chafed under the demands which some of his less sympathetic and less considerate parishioners made upon him. Under these circumstances he welcomed the opportunity, thus providentially placed before him, of accepting a position which offered him a field of usefulness quite as great as that of his pastorate or of any similar charge he might take, and which in any event would entail a less exacting weekly schedule of appointments and give him not only more leisure for the prosecution of his favorite stu-

dies but also—what to him was always a necessary condition for the best performance and the fullest enjoyment of his tasks—a generous measure of freedom to do his work in his own independent way. Accordingly, he secured his dismissal from the Philadelphia Presbytery, on June 5, 1882, and the following autumn entered upon his duties at Lane Seminary.

During the intervening summer he executed a veritable *tour de force* in planning and dictating a complete course of lectures on the history of the Church down to the French Revolution; the very course which, with but minor changes, he used throughout his professorial work at Lane and Princeton Seminaries. We shall have occasion further on to consider these lectures in the light of the purpose for which they were composed, that of serving as his main instrument of instruction for his classes in Church History. Here the remark may suffice, that the very fact that the author never found it either necessary or desirable to undertake any extensive revision of his original manuscript, in spite of the unremitting investigations which he carried on in this department through more than a quarter of a century, shows conclusively how thoroughly he had cultivated the field and how skilfully he had organized the results of his studies, before he actually entered on the duties of his chair.

His installation at Lane Seminary took place on May 8, 1883. His inaugural address bore the title *Church History as a Science, as a Theological Discipline, and as a Mode of the Gospel*.²² It is a comprehensive discussion of its threefold theme, and admirably sets forth his noble conception of the nature of the service to which he was now devoting himself. As we shall see when we come to review his work at Princeton, he remained true to the end to the principles of theological encyclopædia here advocated and to the convictions here expressed concerning the specific influence which the discipline of history, among the other subjects of a seminary curriculum, should exert upon the student.

Dr. DeWitt at Lane Seminary, according to a number of

²² Cincinnati: Elm Street Printing Company, 1883; 8vo, pp. 1-52.

competent witnesses who have kindly given me their recollections of him, was an unusually stimulating and successful teacher. A member of the class of 1885,²³ that came to Cincinnati the same year with Dr. DeWitt, writes :

We looked upon Dr. DeWitt as a man of very generous intellectual furnishing ; for it was evident that, although he had just come from a pastorate, he had been an ardent student of Church History and related subjects, so that he took up the work of his professorship without any apparent handicap as a new man in that chair. His was a magnetic personality, and his influence with his students was very vital and vitalizing. . . . His home was one of the favorite places on the campus where the students gathered. Both Mrs. DeWitt and Miss DeWitt, the doctor's sister, contributed in a marked way to the good times that we enjoyed.

Another student²⁴ says of his "late revered teacher" :

There are few men to whom I owe so much as to him. . . . It was a joy to sit in his class room and listen to his felicitous English and observe his masterly grasp of the subjects with which he dealt. More than any other teacher I have ever known, he taught me the value of a well-defined statement. He made Church History the livest subject in the curriculum. Out of the classroom he was a delightful companion of younger men, always sympathetic and stimulating, friendly and full of encouragement. Many times through the years, I have known of his affection for his old pupils and his interest in their welfare.

Another²⁵ emphasizes especially the professor's influence in commending the historical sermon as a mode of the Gospel, alongside of the doctrinal and expository sermon :

I shall never forget the ability and enthusiasm which characterized all his work. Many times in his class I was deeply stirred as he eloquently and vividly portrayed the development of the kingdom of God. He emphasized the homiletic value of historical studies and urged his students to continue them after graduation, and to take the fruits into the pulpit. I was so impressed by his advice that, after I entered the pastorate, I devoted my spare hours each year to a study of some great period in the history of the Church, and then at the end of the year I gathered up the results in a series of historical sermons which

²³ The Rev. Howard Agnew Johnston, Ph. D., D. D., of Milwaukee.

²⁴ The Rev. Edgar W. Work, D. D., of New York (Lane, 1887).

²⁵ The Rev. Arthur J. Brown, D. D., LL. D., Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions (Lane, 1883).

I delivered Sunday evenings to my congregations. I kept this up during the twelve years of my pastorates. The work that I was doing along these lines became known to my brethren in the ministry, and I had so many letters of inquiry from various parts of the country that I found it necessary to print my outlines. I mention this only to illustrate how Dr. DeWitt influenced me, and whatever the credit, it belonged to him, for it was he who had led me to do the work. His assistance and inspiration in my historical studies was not confined to my student days. He kept in touch with me after my graduation, writing me occasionally and always helpfully. I cherish his memory as that of an accomplished Christian gentleman, a ripe scholar, a magnetic personality, and a professor who not only lectured to his students but took a warm personal interest in them, welcoming them to his home, and following them after they left the Seminary with an affectionate interest and a helpfulness of counsel which were of inestimable value to young ministers.

And one of his colleagues²⁶ at Lane writes with special reference to his personal contact with him:

He at once made his way into my heart. . . . In our walks and talks together we discussed the topics of the day with the utmost freedom. In the Presbytery he at once took a leading place, and in the intimacies of our home life he was always the valued guest. His affection for children was marked, and showed itself in his intercourse with my own little ones. . . . The characteristic which most comes to my mind as I think of my friend is his broad human interest.

I may here add an excerpt from the action of the Seminary authorities on the occasion of his resignation (June 15, 1888):²⁷

Dr. DeWitt has filled the chair of Church History in Lane Seminary for six years with great ability, fidelity and success. . . . The thanks of all the friends of Lane Seminary are due to Dr. and Mrs. DeWitt, not only for their kind and courteous life and spirit among us, but also for their liberal contributions toward the support of the Seminary.

I close the account of Dr. DeWitt's ministry at Lane with a reference to his more important publications during this period. Besides the volume of *Sermons on the Christian Life*

²⁶ The Rev. Henry Preserved Smith, D. D., LL. D., of Union Theological Seminary, New York (Lane, 1872).

²⁷ I am indebted for this transcript from the records to the Rev. William McKibbin, D. D., LL. D., the President of Lane Seminary.

(1885) and the Inaugural Address, already mentioned, we have his *Sermon on the Constitution of the Church of God*, delivered at the dedication of the Seventh Presbyterian Church, East Walnut Hills, Cincinnati, Ohio, October 31, 1886 (Cincinnati, 1886), and *The First General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*,²⁸ an excellent summary of the beginnings of Presbyterianism in America and a vivid account of the organization of the first General Assembly.

In the year 1887 the Board of Directors of the McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago erected a new professorship bearing the title of "Apologetics and Missions," and in the spring of 1888 it invited Dr. DeWitt to become the first incumbent of this chair. He accepted the call and began his work the following September. His formal induction took place on April 3, 1889. His inaugural address²⁹ dealt almost entirely with the subject of Apologetics. It was his purpose to develop his course in this department completely and then to apply himself to the task of doing the same with Missions; but the brief tenure of his position prevented the realization of the second half of his plan. After a brief review of the history of apologetic literature from the Apostolic Age to modern times, the author of the Address defines Apologetics as "the science of the vindication of Christianity as the

²⁸ A paper read as the annual discourse before The Presbyterian Historical Society, May 5, 1887 (Presbyterian Board of Publication, Philadelphia, 1887). The other publications of this period are the following: *Address in Behalf of the Synod, at the Inauguration of Rev. S. F. Scovel, D. D., as President of Wooster University* (Wooster, 1883); and his *Letter to the Rev. Dr. S. D. McConnell*, for the Church Unity Society (*The Churchman*, Feb. 25, 1888), in which he recommends, in answer to the inquiry of this officer of the Society, the amendment of its inhibitory canon with respect to non-episcopally ordained ministers.

²⁹ In *Addresses at the Inauguration of the Rev. John DeWitt, D. D., LL. D., as Professor of Apologetics and Missions in the McCormick Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church* (Chicago, 1889), pp. 9-36. The charge to the professor was given by Charles H. Mulliken, Esq., the President of the Board of Directors. Dr. DeWitt's degree of doctor of laws was conferred upon him by Hanover College in 1888.

supernatural and exclusive religion to the human reason and against unbelief," and then justifies its place in the organism of a theological curriculum. In the course of his discussion he protests against the method of reducing Christianity "to its minimum of dogmatic content, and of making that minimum the special theme of the apologist." He insists "that the field open to the activity of the apologist is as large as Christianity itself; and how large this is will be clear to us if we but recall the fact that Christianity is not only a body of truth, but a mode of life, a series of related institutions and a narrative of historical facts." With this large conception of his subject, he divides the material for a scientific Apologetic into six parts: (1) Fundamental Apologetics, (2) Biblical Apologetics, (3) Doctrinal Apologetics, (4) Historical Apologetics, (5) Comparative Apologetics, and (6) History of Apologetics. He proposes, in his conduct of the course as a whole, to have the selection of its various elements determined by the special importance or suggestiveness of some of these departments, by the timeliness of others, and by a regard for the work done by the other chairs; but the heart and core of the discipline is to be "the philosophic vindication of Christianity, of its presuppositions and its doctrinal contents." He closes with some excellent remarks on the relation of Apologetics to the preaching of the Gospel.

Dr. DeWitt often referred with keen delight to the four years which he spent at McCormick Seminary. His instruction was deeply appreciated by his students, and his influence upon them was as profound as it was salutary. I may refer, by way of confirmation of this statement, to the words of one of his colleagues:³⁰

The testimony of his classes was uniformly to the effect that he inspired his students and strengthened their faith. Of course, he never failed to enlarge the circle of their interests and to cultivate the love of literary and philosophical work. And this same informant adds:

In his relations with the various members of the Faculty, his attitude was that of a loyal colleague and a cordial friend. He

³⁰ Prof. Andrew C. Zenos, D. D., LL. D.

always had a mantle of charity to throw over the defects and failures of his younger colleagues and genuine respect for the sterling qualities of the older ones. He was active in the work of the Presbytery of Chicago, and his learning and wisdom gave him a great influence in its counsels. When he left, everybody felt that a source of strength had been diverted from the Seminary and from the community, though no one was inclined to doubt that he had done the right thing.

And one of his former pupils³¹ speaks of him as an "inspiring teacher," and recalls with special satisfaction the "brilliant and stimulating" "impromptu digressions from the set lectures" which the classes were fond of calling forth.

He would carry us off in flights which ranged through philosophy, theology and literature, and delighted us with the sureness of his touch, the breadth of his learning, and the beauty of his thought and diction.

We can afford space for only one further tribute:³²

Another lasting impression he made upon me was through those inimitable prayers with which he opened the lecture hour. They were manifestly spontaneous, yet every prayer carried such a rich vein of thought, couched in such musically beautiful words, and all so suffused with the spirit of tender devotion as to lift every heart into a higher world. Those prayers were both simple and sublime. Even now I can feel in them the pulse of ancient liturgies, and the poetry of mystics, and the mind of the scholar, and the soul of God's little child. . . . To this day I go back to his lectures for a clear statement of many historic ideas whose genesis and classic formulations he described. He lectured without notes, but with such clarity, cogency and finish of expression as would be possible only to one to whom the whole subject was vivid in the large and in minute details. He inspired his students.

The year after his going to Chicago, the question of the revision of the Westminster Confession of Faith began to agitate the Church. In this controversy Dr. DeWitt took a prominent part,³³ strongly urging that the standards be left

³¹ The Rev. Charles L. Zorbaugh, D. D., of Cleveland, Ohio.

³² The Rev. Edward Yates Hill, D. D., of Philadelphia.

³³ See especially his article on "The Revision of the Confession of Faith," in *The Presbyterian Review*, X (1889), pp. 553-589; also papers I, III, and V, in *Ought the Confession to be Revised? A Series of Papers by John DeWitt, D. D., Henry J. van Dyke, D. D., Benjamin B. Warfield, D. D., William G. T. Shedd, D. D.* (New York, 1890; the three papers

unchanged. He was ready to admit that the phraseology of these venerable documents could here and there be improved, but he insisted that the statement of generic Calvinism which they contain is an admirable and serviceable one; that the liberal terms of subscription in use in our Church, as distinguished from those required in other Reformed Churches, give the ministry a "free and safe" relation to the standards; that in consequence of the theological restlessness of the age, the prevalence of low views of inspiration, and the strong drift toward unbelief and sheer naturalism, the process of revision would ultimately lead to a recasting of the entire creed, with the likelihood that ministers would have to subscribe the *ipsissima verba* of the new formularies, and thus to have to content themselves with less liberty of opinion than they now enjoy. And taking the concrete instances of the proposed amendments, he subjected them to a most searching criticism and showed their inferiority to the unaltered text.

Dr. DeWitt's able advocacy of the conservative side of the revision controversy was widely taken note of throughout the Church; and in particular, it may be added, it did not fail to attract the attention of the Directors of Princeton Seminary when the duty was devolved upon them of finding a successor to Dr. Moffat in the professorship of Church History. Accordingly, on May 3, 1892, they "with perfect unanimity and cordiality,"³⁴ elected Dr. DeWitt to this chair. He at first declined the call, and repeated overtures made to him by the committee appointed to urge his acceptance failed to have the desired effect: he was thoroughly happy in his work at McCormick Seminary and preferred to remain there. But in

having originally appeared in *The New York Evangelist*, June 6, July 11, and July 25, 1889); and "The Revision Committee's First Amendment Criticized" (in *The New York Evangelist*, Feb. 18, 1892). Of Dr. DeWitt's participation in the later revision controversy we shall speak in another connection. The only other article or publication which we have found that dates from the period of the McCormick professorship is that entitled "What is Animal life?" [in *The Presb. and Ref. Review* (1890), pp. 457-461].

³⁴ The Minutes of the Board of Directors of that date.

the altered conditions that arose a few months later, in consequence of the sudden death of his wife, he notified the authorities of his willingness to reconsider his declinature, and thus, their invitation having been renewed, he arranged to enter upon his work at Princeton at the opening of the session in September. These were the circumstances under which he began his twenty years of distinguished service in this institution, the longest, the most fruitful, and the most influential of the six periods—three pastorates and three theological professorships—which filled the span of his ministerial life up to his retirement in 1912.

The year of his coming to Princeton was a notable one in the history of the Seminary. The Faculty of the eighties had been sadly depleted by death. A great luminary of the theological firmament had set, when Dr. A. A. Hodge had passed away in 1886; in this instance, however, the attendant gloom was soon dissipated by another lustre of like brilliance and a much longer ascendancy: in 1887 Dr. Warfield came to the chair which he was to adorn for thirty-four years. But in 1891 Dr. C. W. Hodge was called to his reward, and in 1892 Dr. Aiken. Dr. Moffat died in 1890, but his chair had been vacant since his retirement in 1888. It was, therefore, a memorable event in the annals of Princeton Seminary when in 1892 Dr. Purves, Dr. DeWitt, and Dr. Greene, were called to fill the vacancies in the established chairs and when, the next year, Dr. Vos became the first incumbent of the newly erected professorship of Biblical Theology.

Dr. DeWitt was the sixth professor of Church History in this Seminary. The chair was the second to be established, and its first incumbent was Dr. Samuel Miller, who filled it from 1813 to 1849. During this long tenure, he succeeded, by reason of his exceptionally varied gifts and attainments and his untiring industry as a teacher and author, in securing for the work entrusted to him a place second to no other in the organism of the curriculum studies. On his retirement, Dr. James W. Alexander took charge of the department, but only for a single year. He was succeeded in 1851 by his bro-

ther, Dr. Joseph Addison Alexander, who came to the chair from a five years' service as professor of Oriental and Biblical Literature, and who resigned it in 1859 to become professor of Hellenistic and New Testament Literature. His extraordinary powers of acquisition, interpretation, and expression, combined with his scholarly methods, his breadth of view, his catholic temper, and his sound judgment, made him in nearly every respect an ideal professor of ecclesiastical history, and his administration of the department greatly increased its usefulness and prestige. For two years (1859-1861), Dr. Alexander T. McGill filled the chair, adding its duties to those of his professorship in the practical disciplines. He was succeeded by Dr. James C. Moffat, whose tenure of the chair from 1861 to 1888 was second to that of Dr. Miller in length. Dr. DeWitt has characterized him—his teacher and immediate predecessor in the professorship—as follows: "If we were asked to describe his attainments, we should say 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."³⁵

We have quoted this statement not only because it gives us the estimate of a competent judge in regard to Dr. Moffat, but also because it may serve as an admirable expression of our own conception of the specific traits that so eminently marked Dr. DeWitt's own conduct of this department. What, in general he brought to his chair has become sufficiently obvious from what has been said of him and his work in his pastorates and at Lane and McCormick Seminaries: he brought a vigorous and independent mind disciplined by intensive studies in biblical, philosophical, theological, and historical

³⁵ "The Memorial Tablet to Dr. James C. Moffat" (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.), in *The Princeton Theological Review*, I (1903), pp. 624-630; see p. 627.

literature; a fine urbanity that betokened an unusually good breeding; an intellectual temperament that was distinguished by a sincere love of the truth, a loyal devotion to the standards of his Church, and a disposition to hold his convictions in generous sympathy with those who differed with him; a broad knowledge of men and affairs, combined with much good sense and a rare sobriety of judgment; a magnetic and forceful personality; a deep Christian experience; and the prestige of achieved successes in diverse fields of ministerial service. But the outstanding features of his varied qualifications for the office of the historical professor were the breadth of his general culture and his catholicity of spirit. These were the special endowments and attainments, these were the regnant forces that gave both substance and form to his lectures on the history of the Church and to all his other work in the department. Like his teachers, Dr. Moffat, of Princeton, and Dr. H. B. Smith, Dr. Hitchcock, and Dr. Shedd, of Union Theological Seminary, New York, he conceived historical Christianity as a spiritual dynamic everywhere penetrating and transforming the natural life of the world and making all civilization contribute to its ultimate glorious triumph.³⁶ And the characteristic spirit of the discipline of history is the spirit that is begotten of, and that in turn begets, "the enthusiasm of humanity."³⁷ These ideas not only determined the principles of theological encyclopædia which he commended to his students at Princeton no less than at Lane, but—what is far more important for any true estimate of his work as a teacher of Church History—they gave to his influence in the class room its distinctive quality. We cannot do better than quote his own words:³⁸ Church History "perpetuates and invigorates in the professional school the humane influence of the college of the liberal arts. It presents

³⁶ *Church History as a Science, as a Theological Discipline, and as a Mode of the Gospel* (the Inaugural address at Lane Seminary, 1883), pp. 29ff.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 42. This was one of Dr. DeWitt's favorite phrases.

³⁸ "The Memorial Tablet to Dr. James Moffat," as cited, p. 627.

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 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." And what he says of Dr. Moffat's course of lectures³⁹ is precisely true of his own: "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 movements of Christianity in its relations to European civilization."

There are various views of what a professor's function ought to be. Much obviously depends upon the nature of the chair and not a little upon the man. In this, as in most of our theological seminaries, our teachers have been recruited for the most part from the pastorate. This has been the case particularly in the department of Church History, and that for the simple reason just quoted from Dr. DeWitt's characterization of Dr. Moffat: this is the least special, the most general, of the courses of instruction. Even so, however, we find several rather well-defined types of professors of Church History.

There is first of all the professional historian—he has flour-

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 629.

ished most vigorously in the theological faculties of German universities—the man of exceptional linguistic gifts and attainments, who early in life determines to become a specialist in the investigation of some select field in the broad domain, who wins recognition in the academic world by the publication of a doctor's thesis that may or not be a contribution to scientific knowledge, but that at least gives evidence of a capacity for independent and thorough research; the man who becomes known as an authority in his chosen field and who, whatever limitations he may have as a lecturer, is likely to find his chief delight and reward in inspiring a few choice spirits to follow him in the use of his scholarly methods and to imitate him in his literary productivity. With the hypothetical yet most real "average student" of whom educational experts are wont to talk so much, this teacher has scant concern. His primary purpose is not to impart a general and well-proportioned knowledge of the field as a whole, but rather to promote scientific research. His seminar becomes a veritable training school of future historians.

Then there is the professor who, rightly or wrongly presupposing a fair acquaintance on the part of his students with the substance of the course, seeks by means of his lecture to stimulate them, not so much to undertake a minute investigation or intensive study of any particular phase of the subject, but rather to read independently along lines of their own choosing. He will have no zeal to make his presentation complete; he will not hesitate to refer the class to standard authorities for a knowledge of topics which he may omit altogether or skim over lightly; but he will strive to have his lectures on the subjects he does discuss as suggestive, attractive, and timely as possible; and occasionally he will gather his more or less disconnected discourses together into a volume which may contribute little that is new but which to the informed reader may be specially worth while because of its felicitous generalizations, its colorful details, the excellence of its judgments, or the engaging qualities of its style. It is a

type that has often adorned the French and English divinity schools.

But there is a third kind of professor in this as in many another department of theological training. His talents and attainments are of a less conspicuous order, but not on that account, all things considered, less useful or valuable. He is governed in the main by the stern, hard facts of his vocation as a teacher—the want of adequate preparation on the part of his students, their lack of time for much collateral reading, their inability to carry on independent studies, and the consequent necessity of his imparting the whole subject in outline form within the brief limits of an academic year or even a semester. He must “touch and go,” being careful to omit nothing of basal importance in the estimation of the presbyterial examiners, but having no leisure to dwell long on any theme, no matter how much it may appeal to his special interests or the desires of his class. If he uses a textbook, he may, indeed, feel at liberty to enlarge on some topics, but his main business is to see that all his students have a presentable precipitate in their minds of the essentials of the course. His lectures may be stimulating, but hardly brilliant; but they must, to realize their aim, be clear, comprehensive, properly balanced, concise, and adequately informational.

It is not hard to tell to which of these general types Dr. DeWitt conformed. He had little aptitude and less taste for the task of a *wissenschaftlicher Historiker*. A pastor for the first seventeen years of his ministerial life, he never acquired a thorough mastery of French or German as an instrument of research. He appreciated the work of the patient investigator and the erudite professor, though he often found it hard to do justice to the scholarly but dull lucubrations of some budding *Privatdozent* whose learning he would not question, but whose heavy style he could not but deplore. But he had no relish for the exploration of sources, even in good translations, nor for the laborious making of notes and excerpts from acknowledged authorities. He rather delighted to “read all around a subject,” and the largest treatment of it that was available

in good English was the one that was most to his liking. Thus his knowledge was the knowledge of an assiduous, independent, and thoughtful reader who kept his eye well on the salient features of a story, on the main bearings of a discussion, on the underlying principles of a scheme of thought, on the outstanding achievements of a great leader, on the abiding historical values of a given epoch, but who cared little for the minute details of an elaborately documented learning; the knowledge of a man remarkably well informed on the subjects with which he had to deal, full and accurate knowledge of the kind that a capacious and retentive memory like his could always use to good advantage and sometimes with striking effects, but not the knowledge of a scientific and thorough-going specialist in his field. Nor could he conscientiously adopt for classroom purposes the methods of the second type of teacher. He knew only too well that the students had to get the course in its entirety from him or there would be lamentable gaps in their acquisitions. He had, indeed, the resources of knowledge and likewise the rhetorical ability to produce most admirable addresses on select biographical and historical themes; and these occasional discourses form not only the largest but, on the whole, the most characteristic and valuable part of his published writings. But the staple of his work with his classes was, and under the circumstances had to be, the composition and delivery of lectures which had their highest merit, not in their originality, or their worth as independent contributions, or even in their inspirational power or their literary charm, but rather in their adaptation to the purpose of giving a synoptic view of the essential elements in the historic development of the Christian Church.

Viewed from this standpoint, the only fair one to take, Dr. DeWitt's lectures were admirable instruments of instruction; perfectly adjusted to the needs of his students; as clear and simple as the nature of the material permitted; covering well the whole field to be surveyed; always making the things of first importance stand out sharply to view; free from all extravagances of diction and exaggerations of praise or cen-

sure—calm, unimpassioned, eminently fair; revealing at all times the refined taste, the broad culture, the generous sympathies, the humane spirit, the catholic temper, the mature wisdom and the sound judgment of the accomplished Christian gentleman and scholar. There was something spacious and impressive in his way of unfolding his subjects, and the sensation of delight with which one listened to his introductory remarks and began to feel the play of his magnetic personality gave way before long to another impression, equally distinct and vivid, that of the commanding intelligence, the mental vigor, the reserve force, the stimulating and inspiring power of the reader. He had much of that noblest gift of the true teacher—the ability to impress himself in vital ways upon the minds and characters of those under his care. There was a great deal in his richly furnished intellectual life that integrated itself congenially and intimately into the folds of each student's wants, and made men feel that they got from him much more than their treacherous memories could reproduce on an examination paper. The high and serious temper which marked his customary manner frequently yielded, much to the enjoyment of the class, to the exercise of his native gift of humor. As one of his students has put it, "He taught Church History with a twinkle in his eye. The subject could have been made a very dry one, but he made it a very tasty one."⁴⁰ Keenly sensitive to everything beautiful in nature, to all that is noble in art, literature, and the deeds of men, eager to see and to make others see the best that divine grace has wrought in the many-sided story of human progress here below, he exerted an influence that was intellectually as quickening as it was spiritually beneficent. "In fact, it may be said of him that he was a professor of the art of appreciation; and for this reason, among others, he was himself most thoroughly appreciated by his students."⁴¹ Men felt that his classroom was not only a pleasant but a good

⁴⁰ The Rev. Owen Davies Odell, D. D., of Sewickley, Pa. (in a private letter).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

place to be in, and they were grateful for the privilege of studying Church History under one whom they were constrained not only to respect and admire but also to love.

One of the most interesting features of Dr. DeWitt's lecturing was his habit of laying aside his manuscript at times and indulging in extemporaneous remarks on a great variety of themes, mostly, indeed, such as were connected with the ever-changing topics of his course, but sometimes such as were suggested by a student's more or less irrelevant question or by some issue of special interest in the daily press. Rising from his chair on such occasions, and now walking up and down the full length of the platform, now pausing to write a few words or perhaps a sentence or two on the blackboard, in order to fix attention on the specific point to be brought out, and now halting before his desk or bending over it, he would, apparently without the least premeditation, enter upon a discussion in which the resources of his knowledge, his practical wisdom, his humor and satire were brought to bear in the most attractive and impressive manner. For ten or fifteen minutes—often it was till the bell began to ring—he would conduct the class in most instructive and entertaining fashion into some of the fairest nooks and corners of his well-tilled fields of history, philosophy, theology, or literature. These *obiter dicta* were commonly regarded as a most useful expedient to stimulate and deepen interest in the course of instruction. He evidently enjoyed them as much as the students did, and though some of the remarks had no direct, or at least no necessary connection with the matter in hand, he knew that they would contribute to the usefulness of the future ministers. Revealing, as they were wont to do, the choicest elements of his rich culture and the most engaging qualities of his personality, they no doubt will live longer in the recollections of those who sat under him than anything that was read from his manuscript or reproduced from the textbook which he sometimes used instead of his lectures. They remind one of the Apostle Paul's manner of tucking away some of his best things in a parenthesis.

In the conduct of his work as a teacher Dr. DeWitt was governed by a high sense of duty. His fidelity to the obligations of his chair was such that he seldom permitted anything to prevent his presence with the class at the appointed time. The papers which he set for the written tests or the final examinations were thoroughly fair, never containing any mere catch-questions; but general as they were, giving the student ample opportunity to reveal his knowledge of the subject, whether he had taken notes on the lectures or used books of reference, they could not be satisfactorily answered by the man who might be tempted to try to hide his ignorance within the spacious fabric of an airy "philosophy of history" that unfortunately had no concrete facts on which to rest its bulk of hazy generalizations, or by the man who might regard a pat historical illustration borrowed from his last Sunday's homiletic effusion as a sufficient discussion of a question that called for a respectable amount of biographical or doctrinal detail. He was patient with students afflicted with natural dulness or poor memories, provided they gave evidence of sincere and diligent endeavor; but he had no toleration for indolence, conceit, or bluffing. He was ever ready to slacken his speed for the conscientious note-taker or to elucidate a point which a mere reference may have left obscure: he was reasonable in his methods and demands as a teacher; but he expected, and, be it added, he generally succeeded in getting, a fair amount of honest work out of the classes.

We have thus far spoken only of Dr. DeWitt's conduct of the main instruction in his department. But in addition to the course in Church History that was prescribed for all undergraduates, he offered various extra-curriculum or optional courses. Of these, two in particular were repeatedly given and much appreciated, that in the History of the Doctrine of the Atonement and that in American Christianity. In these his method was quite different from that used in the regular work. The classes met at his home in the evening and, after a number of preliminary sessions dealing with the nature and method of the work, and the necessary bibliographical helps,

each student in turn read his paper on the topic assigned him at the outset, after which the class engaged in a discussion of the subject. The system developed a considerable amount of independent study, and as the seminar was generally quite largely attended, the contributions by the members made a fairly adequate presentation of the material as a whole. It was for each student a vital exercise in historical investigation and composition, and in every academic generation there were those who regarded this work as the most stimulating and helpful influence which they received at the Seminary. The most valuable feature of it was, of course, the professor's criticism and discussion of the papers, a duty which he performed with great candor, thoroughness, impartiality, and sympathy, making good any deficiency in the treatment presented, emphasizing the elements of prime importance, recapitulating previous conclusions, calling attention to the less obvious connections in the historic processes, and enlarging on the peculiarities of some of the books used as authorities. We have said that Dr. DeWitt himself had little taste for the making of minute historical researches, but it is equally true, on the other hand, that he inspired one and another of the members of his seminars to read the sources for themselves and collate the necessary data for a thoroughly independent study of the subject assigned. In the course on the atonement, for instance, he created enthusiasm enough to induce one of the ablest students—one who had acquired a fair mastery of mediæval Latin—to do what probably no divinity student in America had ever ventured to undertake before, to tabulate and interpret in systematic form the leading soteriological passages in the ponderous tomes of Duns Scotus.

The course in American Christianity ought also to be emphasized in this connection; for it was the occasion of Dr. DeWitt's making an intensive study of the beginnings of Presbyterianism in this country, with special reference to its influence in the sphere of the higher education. After having covered the ground repeatedly with his classes, he gathered some of his results for publication. I refer to his three sub-

stantial articles on the history of Princeton College, a series that had a special timeliness in view of the celebration in 1896 of the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the institution, but which has a considerable permanent value as an independent appraisal of the facts narrated.⁴²

There is a special service which Dr. DeWitt rendered the Seminary, which not only my wish to do full justice to his devotion to his chair but also my personal gratitude to him constrain me to mention. In order to enlarge the work of his department, especially by making possible the introduction of more extra-curriculum courses, he suggested to the Board of Directors in 1902 the establishment of an instructorship in Church History and, in the absence of the necessary funds for this purpose, he generously offered to pay the salary of the teacher whom they might appoint to this position. The proposal was adopted on the conditions specified, and as to its usefulness it need only be said that in the period, little more than a decade, in which it was maintained, it served not only to enrich the department in the manner indicated, but also to give to its three successive incumbents the training which resulted in their being elected to professorships of church history in Seminaries of our Church. It is well known, and attention may here fittingly be called to the fact, that Dr. DeWitt, like many of his colleagues in the Faculty, not only deeply regretted, but also seriously questioned the wisdom of, the abolition of the instructorship, after it had thus so completely justified its continuance alongside of the similar foundations.

Turning to services of a more general character which Dr. DeWitt rendered during his professorship at Princeton, we may note, first of all, his work in connection with the Revi-

⁴² "The Planting of Princeton College," in *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, VIII (1897), pp. 173-197; "Princeton College Administrations in the Eighteenth Century," (*ibid.*, pp. 387-417); "Princeton College Administrations in the Nineteenth Century" (*ibid.*, pp. 636-682). These three articles subsequently appeared in the first volume of *Universities and Their Sons* (ed. J. L. Chamberlain), 1898, as "Book I: Princeton College" in "The History of Princeton University."

sion Controversy that engaged the Church in the first years of this century. Dr. Henry van Dyke writes concerning him as a fellow member of the Assembly's Committee on the Revision of the Standards:⁴³

Dr. DeWitt's contribution was of special value because of his knowledge of church history, his broad scholarship, his logical mind, and his irenic spirit. His practical experience as pastor and preacher, and his gift of humor made his work . . . most helpful and effective. He represented, of course, the conservative view. But he did it with a wide intelligence, a humane culture, and a Christian sympathy which made it count for good. He was indeed *Doctor Angelicus*. . . .

It is noteworthy that in the personal form of the "Brief Statement" which he wrote, printed, and submitted to the subcommittee in 1901, . . . he stressed the essentials of Christian doctrine as they bear directly on worship and conduct. And this principle is followed in the "Brief Statement" as finally adopted by unanimous vote, by the General Assembly of 1902.⁴⁴

⁴³ In a private letter to the writer.

⁴⁴ Dr. DeWitt's attitude in 1901 to the question of the revision of the standards is reflected in the following chronologically arranged publications of his: "Confessional Revision and the Present Crisis" (Address before the Presbyterian Union of New York, March 4, 1901) in the *Princeton Press*, March 9, 1901; *A Speech, in Support of the Motion to Dismiss the Subject of Confessional Revision, Made at Philadelphia in the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, May 24, 1901, by the Rev. John DeWitt, a Commissioner of New Brunswick Presbytery* (Princeton, The University Press, 1901); *Brief Statement of the Reformed Faith* (privately printed, 1901); *Second and Revised Form of a Brief Statement of the Reformed Faith* (privately printed, 1901); *Two Brief Statements of Faith and Five Letters from Professors of Systematic Theology* (ed. John DeWitt), privately printed, 1901; *Assembly's Committee of Revision, 1901: The Titles and Articles of the Brief and Untechnical Statement of the Reformed Faith, Adopted by the Committee in Session at Washington, Revised by Henry van Dyke and John DeWitt, and Presented by Them for the Consideration of the Committee* (privately printed, 1901). Dr. DeWitt appended to his signature to the final Report of the Committee the following statement: "In signing the Report of the Assembly's Committee on Revision, I except as follows: (1) I am opposed to the verbal amendment of the seventh section of Chapter xvi of the Confession. (2) I think it unwise to erect into a Church doctrine our belief that all who die in infancy are saved. (3) I do not think that the second sentence of Article x of the 'brief and untechnical statement' (the article entitled 'Of the Holy Spirit') accurately states the 'Reformed Faith.'" (*Minutes of the General Assembly, etc., 1902, p. 97.*)

Dr. DeWitt also served on the committee appointed by the General Assembly of 1903 to prepare, "in harmony with the Directory of Worship, a Book of Simple Forms and Services." Dr. Henry van Dyke, the Chairman of this Committee, says of his colleague:⁴⁵

He was a strong advocate of doing things decently and in order. He had no sympathy with the Dolly Varden type of service which has crept into many Presbyterian Churches. . . . The *Book of Common Worship*, as completed with his invaluable aid, seemed to him to embody the essentials of the Christian faith, and to express them in harmony with the *Directory for Worship*.

He was strongly in favor of using the language of the *Directory*, as far as possible, in the rubrics and instructions for use of the *Book of Common Worship*. . . . He also approved the use of the language of the Bible (in the King James' Version, as more familiar,) in the various forms and services. He preferred this to the technical language of doctrinal theology. . . . He thought that the special needs and desires of the Church in modern times should be expressed in new prayers. But he had a special love for those ancient forms in which the spirit of Christian faith is uttered in clear and noble words.

On both of these committees the influence and advice of Dr. DeWitt were of inestimable value. His profound learning lent weight to his words. His genial nature and his Christian spirit made them persuasive. He was in effect a fine example of liberal conservative Christianity, and a man with whom it was a delight to work.

In 1904 Dr. DeWitt was honored with an election to the Board of Trustees of Princeton University, as a life member. He served in this capacity until 1919, when he resigned owing to failing health. President John Grier Hibben speaks of the late trustee as follows:⁴⁶

During these years of active service he commanded not only the respect but the affection of his colleagues upon the Board, and we were constantly indebted to his wise counsel. For many years he was a member of the Trustees' Committee on the Curriculum, and by his scholarly ability, and his vigorous personality, he contributed much of permanent value in the deliberations of the Committee, and was always particularly concerned in main-

⁴⁵ In the letter referred to above.

⁴⁶ "Report of the President" (*Princeton University, The Official Register, 1924*), p. 14.

taining the highest intellectual, moral and spiritual standards of the University."

In 1902, when *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review* of which Dr. Warfield was the editor, was about to be discontinued and the question was being discussed whether the Seminary Faculty could assume the responsibility of its further publication, Dr. DeWitt made this possible by volunteering to serve as editor-in-chief; and the name of the quarterly was changed to *The Princeton Theological Review*. During the five years that he bore this responsibility, he worthily maintained the high standard of this organ of scientific theology. His own contributions to the *Review* during his active life at Princeton were quite numerous, especially in the earlier period. We have already referred to his articles on Dr. Shedd (1895), the history of Princeton College (1897), and Jonathan Edwards (1904). Among his other more important contributions we may mention "The Testimony of the Holy Spirit to the Bible,"⁴⁷ "The Place of the Westminster Assembly in Modern History,"⁴⁸ and the two capital articles which together form a valuable sketch of the early history of Princeton Seminary—"Archibald Alexander's Preparation for His Professorship"⁴⁹ and "The Intellectual Life of Samuel Miller".⁵⁰ Among his more notable occasional addresses mention may be made of the opening sermon which he preached at the Seventh Council of the Reformed Churches, at Washington, D. C., in 1899.⁵¹

⁴⁷ *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, VI (1895), pp. 69-85.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, IX (1898), pp. 369-383.

⁴⁹ *The Princeton Theological Review*, III (1905), pp. 573-594.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, IV (1906), pp. 168-190. The minor articles of the period are the following: "Dr. Roberts on Seminary Control" (*The Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, IV, 1893, pp. 134-140); "The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America [of 1893]," *ibid.*, IV, pp. 470-476; "The General Assembly [of 1901] of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A." (*ibid.*, XII (1901), pp. 673-677); "Relations of Church History to Preaching" (*The Princeton Theological Review*, V, 1907, pp. 98-112).

⁵¹ It bears the title "The Bible and the Reformed Churches." It was published in 1899 and is a worthy complement to his address on "The Worship of the Reformed Churches," delivered before the Council in

As early as December, 1910, Dr. DeWitt made known to the Board of Directors of the Seminary the purpose that had been ripening in his mind for some years, that of resigning his professorship, the resignation to take effect, if agreeable to them, at the close of the session of 1911-12. The Faculty, taking knowledge of his intention, by formal action requested the President to represent to the Directors that it was "the judgment and wish of the Faculty that Professor DeWitt be urged not to present his resignation." Learning of this resolution of his colleagues, however, Dr. DeWitt in April, 1911, again expressed to the Board his conviction that in view of his age and health he must relinquish his chair not later than the time originally specified, when, as he said, he would "be nearly seventy years old." Accordingly, at its meeting in May, 1911, the Board "with deep regret" acquiesced in his request and resolved that the title of professor emeritus be conferred upon him at the conclusion of the next session. In May, 1912, he thus completed his twenty years of distinguished service in this Seminary. He then withdrew from all participation in its affairs and retired, as he was wont to inform his colleagues, from "active life."

He had often spoken of his desire, providence permitting, to have "a sabbatical period" at the close of his career, and it is pleasant to be able to state that his wishes were destined to be fulfilled under circumstances of mercy and privilege that far exceeded the normal expectations of men at three score years and ten. He was spared for more than a decade;

1880. The other occasional addresses, so far as we have learned, are the following: "Beginnings of Presbyterianism in the Middle Colonies" (Sermon at the Centennial Memorial of the English Presbyterian Congregation ["Market Square Presbyterian Church"], Harrisburg, Pa., Feb. 11, 1894) in *Centennial Memorial, etc.*, Harrisburg, 1894, pp. 37-62; "Philip Melancthon: Scholar and Reformer" (in *The Presbyterian Quarterly*, July 1897, and in pamphlet form, Richmond, 1897); "The Inauguration of Prof. Allen Macy Dulles, of Auburn Theological Seminary" (in *The Auburn Seminary Record*, Nov. 10, 1905): and his "Address at the Dedication of the Market Street Entrance to the City of Harrisburg, Pa., April 20, 1906" (in *Proceedings at the Dedication, etc.*, privately printed, 1906).

his health, with the exception of a single summer, continued remarkably good; his faculties remained almost unimpaired to within a few months of his final sickness; his old age was beautiful in its serenity and cheerfulness. For a short period he still preached occasionally; to the very last he regularly attended the Chapel services Sunday mornings; for some time he continued his work of many years as the chairman of the Committee on Versions of the American Bible Society; and, as we have seen, he retained his membership in the Board of Trustees of Princeton University till the summer of 1919.

In our account of Dr. DeWitt as student, as pastor of three churches, and as professor in three Theological Seminaries, we have repeatedly taken occasion to express our own conception, as well as those of other pupils and colleagues, of his personality. But before taking leave of our engaging theme, we must try to get a more intimate view of his character; for only so can we get a full impression of what he truly was. And we may the more appropriately make this attempt in view of the fact that he was sometimes quite misunderstood by those—especially students—who, knowing him only slightly and mistaking his natural dignity and reserve for a forbidding hauteur, failed to see the more tender and winsome aspects of his nature. At Lane and McCormick Seminaries, where the classes were of only moderate size, the students were wont to find in him, as we have seen, not only a forceful and attractive teacher but also a genial host and a friendly and helpful counselor in his home. But at Princeton the larger attendance made close touch with individual students more difficult, and many of them had no acquaintance with him beyond that of his official relations with them. But I should be unjust both to his memory and to my own feelings, if I did not give due expression to my profound gratitude that, in the providence of God, I was permitted to become one of his most intimate friends. Not in my student days, but in the three years in which I assisted him in his department, and in thirteen years of further association with him during his active and retired life, it was my privilege to see a great deal

of him, and I am constrained to say that so far as I can now determine, I feel that, excepting only my parents and two or three of the instructors of my youth, I owe more to him, in the way of intellectual and moral stimulus, than to any other person I have ever known. To me John DeWitt was an inspiring teacher, an edifying preacher, and a suggestive and instructive writer; but all in all, I found him greatest and best as a friend.

Some lives can be easily reduced to biographical form: the best part of them is what they do; and to chronicle them is to magnify them. Other men are rather made smaller by being described. For what is best in them defies analysis and eludes portrayal, as the perfume of the flower never appears in a painting of it. In the case of Dr. DeWitt it was the man in him that more and more, in the course of my companionship with him, impressed me. A character like his has a power all its own: it is something different from talent, learning, attainments, deeds or manners, or all these combined; one cannot define it, but one can feel it, and delight in it, and be grateful for it. To me he became a veritable apocalypse of what is lofty in principle, wholesome in thought, sound in doctrine, pure in morals, lovable in disposition, wise in counsel, charming in manner, and noble and exemplary in Christian character and endeavor. I like to think of him most as I came to know him in my frequent visits to his study and on the many walks which he invited me to take with him through the streets of the Princeton he so dearly loved.

His home on the Seminary Campus, like his cottage at Spring Lake, where he was accustomed to summer, bore testimony to his refined tastes, his love of the beautiful, and his scholarly interests. He had reëstablished his household by his marriage, in August, 1894, to Mrs. Elinor Maclay Allen, of Erie, Pa., and during his active life Dr. and Mrs. DeWitt endeared themselves to their many friends by their exquisite hospitality. Blessed with a far more generous portion of the good things of this life than falls to the lot of most ministers of the Gospel, and by no means indifferent to the comforts

and luxuries that money can buy, he ordered his temporal affairs with discretion, was profoundly grateful to God for the simple joys of his everyday life, and, scorning the sordid temper of the mammon-worshipper, set a fine example of the Christian use of material possessions.

But it was in his study, amidst his beloved books, that he was seen—or perhaps we ought to say, heard—to best advantage. How he loved to talk, and how well he could do it! His conversational powers were indeed extraordinary. His memory in his prime must have been of the sort that is like wax to receive impressions and like marble to retain them. Out of the abundance of his intellectual resources—for as regards the treasures of the heart, he was never effusive and seldom demonstrative, being one of the most objective of men—but out of the fulness of his general and special knowledge, his rich culture, his broad and varied experience of life, he could bring forth things new and old, to stimulate, instruct, and entertain, as few men can. A facile raconteur, he spoke freely of his own past and had at his command an inexhaustible fund of stories, amusing and serious, about men of note whom he had met or of whom he had read. Little given to gossip, and never indulging in mean or uncharitable remarks, he was habitually disposed to see what was best in men, to make allowances for their foibles, and to be as generous as possible in his appreciation of their excellencies. The conversation might begin with the weather or any other commonplace, but before long, if only his interlocutor gave him the least encouragement for so doing, he would get into the heights of philosophy or theology, or at least up to the broad table-lands of literature and history. It would be hard to imagine anything more awakening, delightful, and helpful to a young colleague and companion, than these talks of his—often reinforced by his bringing down some well-thumbed volume from his shelves, quickly finding the desired passage and then reading it with his characteristic measured emphasis and impressive seriousness. And one's enjoyment of the experience was heightened by the obvious pleasure which the

talker found in the exercise of this fine gift of his. It was interesting, too, to see how well he could hold his own with specialists in any department of science or learning; he not only followed but intelligently took part in the discussion: one was perforce impressed with the range and versatility of his intellectual life. In his later years, indeed, he was quite content to let others, young or old, take the lead in conversation; but only a few weeks before his departure I was astonished at the vigor and accuracy of his memory in recalling with circumstantial minuteness the several periods, with their respective literary products, in the career of his teacher and friend, Dr. Shedd. As I think of the many delightful hours I spent with him in his study, I can only say that I have seldom, if ever, had the privilege of knowing intimately any other man of such varied gifts, such congenial tastes, such generous sympathies, and such helpful ministries of friendship as I found united in him. Alas, that the voice is stilled that so often hailed us to his porch or library, or bade us farewell at his front door with a cordial and cheery, "Well, come again."

In the meetings of the Faculty Dr. DeWitt was a valuable counselor. Sincere, frank, independent, self-poised, he advanced his opinions with manly courage and a genuine confidence in their soundness. Neither indifferent nor indisposed to take part in the discussions, he was never arrogant or obstinate, nor would he let an adverse decision embitter his disposition or even mar the serenity of his spirit. He was capable, on occasion, of showing umbrage, but having liberated his mind and conscience, he would take pains to manifest his goodwill and charity. His judgment in matters of discipline was likely to be severe, but it was sure to be sober and impartial. He believed that rules were meant to be enforced and that the Faculty could determine better than the students what educational standards and policies should be maintained.

A Presbyterian by birth, education, and conviction, he was conservative by temperament and by the influence of his professional work as a student and teacher of history. Jealous of

the new and untried, he would indulge in no Utopian dreams in regard to the speedy reunion of Christendom whether on the basis of prayer-books, hymns, or confessional statements. He had rather old-fashioned views of the nature and functions of the Gospel ministry, believing that even the most elaborate ecclesiastical machinery can accomplish nothing without the spiritual power which only the right use of the truth of God can supply. He had scant sympathy with the modern over-emphasis on the organization of church activities. He looked with suspicion on great religious conventions and put a rather low estimate on all methods that tended to produce undue religious excitement. His confidence was rather in the faithful use of the regular ordinances of the house of God, and among all the means of grace none in his judgment was more efficacious than the performance of one's appointed duties, however inconspicuous and humble they may be. Firm and decided in his theological views, never wavering in his loyalty to the traditions of the Reformed faith, the maintenance of which he regarded as a sacred responsibility, he was at the same time irenic and catholic in spirit, not only willing but also able to do justice to the opinions of those who differed with him, and entirely devoid of that *rabies theologorum* that so often mistakes a narrow dogmatism for devotion to the truth. He was well aware of the tendencies of the *Zeitgeist*, and spoke and wrote with candor and courage of the dangers to evangelical Christianity which he found in the naturalistic trend of the times. But he was large-minded, not only in the intellectual but also in the ethical significance of that term: he had not only a broad vision and thorough understanding of the problems of the faith, but he was truly magnanimous in the sense that he had much patience with those whom he could not but regard as erring brethren, and, above all, much confidence in the divine Head of the Church as the Lord of all ages, and in the Holy Spirit as the spirit of truth and wisdom for all times. Some, indeed, occasionally spoke of him, and to him, as being "too flexible" in his doctrinal views, but he always, and that with good rea-

son, resented such reflections on the soundness and stability of his religious convictions. He was as transparently honest and veracious in his theologizing as he was in his dealings with his colleagues and his students. He had no hesitation about showing his colors in any theological controversy of his day. But he was not a *jure divino* Presbyterian, and he never supposed that his denomination had a monopoly of revealed truth and moral excellencies. He enjoyed professional relations with ministers in all communions, and, though he regarded the theory of "apostolical succession" much as St. Paul treated an idol—as just "not anything in the world"—he yet delighted to number priests and prelates of the Roman Catholic Church among his friends. He had a large appreciation of the enduring religious values in historic Christianity, and was specially fond, as we have seen, of the venerable liturgies that have nourished the devotions of Christians of every age. The communion of the faithful of all lands and of all the centuries was to him a reality not only for the mind but also for the heart.

There is one trait in the character of Dr. DeWitt which ought to be mentioned because of the light it throws upon what was sometimes regarded as a rather serious defect in him. Even those who greatly admired him would at times find fault with him for not publishing more than he did. They longed to see him give more generously to the Church and the world the benefits of his scholarly attainments. The fact is, strange as it may seem to some, that he was singularly devoid of the love of literary fame. One could, indeed, wish that he had had more ambition of this sort. But with all his delight in study and his keen satisfaction in completing a piece of literary work, he was nevertheless apt, after the thing was done, to underestimate the worth of his results. He was wont, too, to remind his critics that some of them probably never took the pains to inform themselves as to the amount of literary work he did produce—a remark to which our bibliography of his published writings gives not a little weight. At one time he seriously thought of making a selection, amounting to

several octavo volumes, from the mass of his manuscript sermons, addresses, and lectures; and after his retirement from his chair he addressed himself with considerable enthusiasm to the writing of an autobiography,—a project the realization of which many a friend of his besides the writer of this article would have welcomed with delight. But in the end the unfinished story and all his other unpublished materials were consigned to the flames. He thought much less highly of the products of his pen than did those who knew him best and, they would add, than he ought to have done.

Dr. DeWitt talked little, even in his old age, about his religious states, and said little, at any time, about personal religion. But in a real sense his Christianity was co-extensive with his life, enveloping it like an atmosphere, and illuminating it like a sun: and, like these two influences in the natural world, bringing forth and maturing an abundant and beautiful fruitage. But in his prayers, by the very necessities of the case, he revealed himself, and who that ever heard him voicing the needs and aspirations of his fellow men before the throne of God could question the reality or the richness of his spiritual life? His prayers were characterized by naturalness, fervor, dignity, and solemn earnestness. There were no flights of imagination, no ecstatic raptures, in them. What tropical expressions they contained were almost without exception Scriptural. He did not preach in his prayers nor did he intersperse them with pious ejaculations or meaningless sentimentalities. They were the free outpourings of a heart that was much at home in the secret place of the Most High, that knew its own wants and yearnings and could correctly interpret and appropriately express those of his fellow worshippers. In their holy reverence, their skilful use of the language of the inspired Word, their comprehensiveness, their adaption to the varied phases of Christian character and duty, their profound grasp of human need and divine grace, and their uplifting and edifying power, they were models of what such public utterances should be. Specially impressive were the exalted adorations and thanksgivings, filling one with a sense of the ineffable majesty of the Deity, and of the

necessity of humility, penitence, gratitude, and submission as essentials of the spirit of true worship.

His gift of public prayer was in one aspect but the adaptation to their highest use, of his exceptional powers of expression; but it was also the ripe product of a grace that he faithfully cultivated in the privacy of his own devotions. One of his colleagues has informed me that time and again, as he looked out from his window at daybreak, the sight that greeted his eye was Dr. DeWitt alone in his oratory—the little room off from his bedchamber on the second floor—reading his morning lesson from the Bible and then on his knees spending his customary season—often a full hour—in prayer.

And now he has ascended to the upper sanctuary, where he needs no more the mediation of prophet and apostle, where hope has become eternal fruition and faith has given place to the beatific vision. His end came peacefully on Monday, November 19, 1923, after an illness of about two weeks. As day by day, during those closing scenes of his earthly life, I went to his bedside to fulfil his oft-repeated wish that I commend his soul to God, his calm and serene passage into the mystic shadows impressed me as a holy translation. "Pray for me, that I may be safe." were among the last words I heard him utter. Later, still conscious that the time of his departure was near, he sang, as best his ebbing strength permitted, the first lines of his favorite hymn, "Rock of Ages, cleft for me." Truly, there was little of the sting of death in this scene. He slept in peace, to awake in glory.

As we who loved him and will ever cherish his memory recall the manifold mercies, temporal and spiritual, with which our Heavenly Father crowned this long life and made it so rich in blessing to the Church and the world, we cannot but thank God for the gift of this able, faithful, and noble minister of the Gospel, and no words can more fittingly express our gratitude than those of that great hymn of praise with which our departed friend so often lifted our hearts in adoration and thanksgiving to God—*Te Deum laudamus*.

Princeton.

FREDERICK W. LOETSCHER.